COMPARISON: Honda CB900F, Kawasaki GPz1100, Suzuki GS1100

250cc Enduro Shootout: Husqvarna WR vs. Kawasaki KDX

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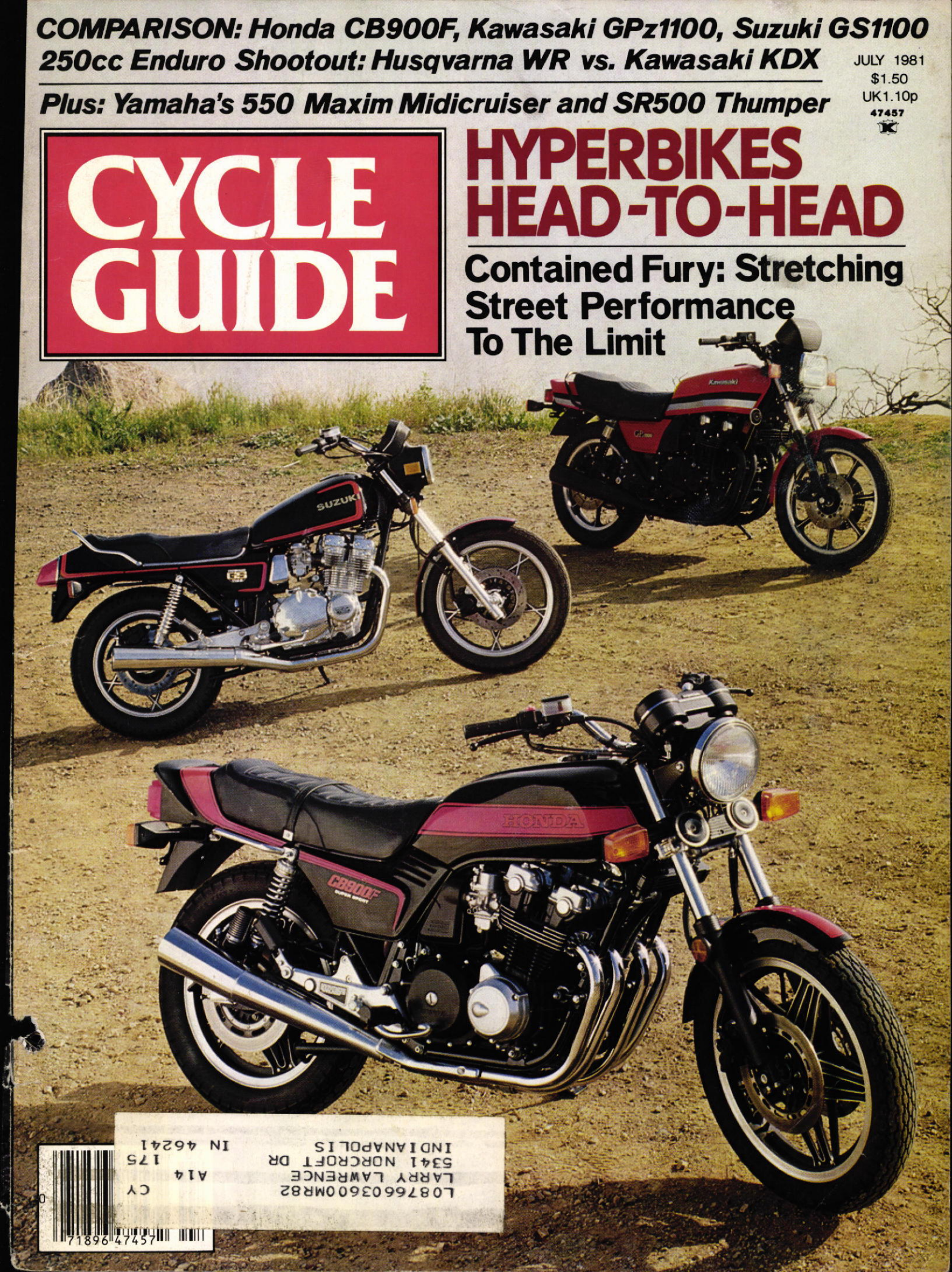

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—Pg. 34

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The ultimate confrontation. Hyperbikes at 30 paces. Photo by Chris Eastman.

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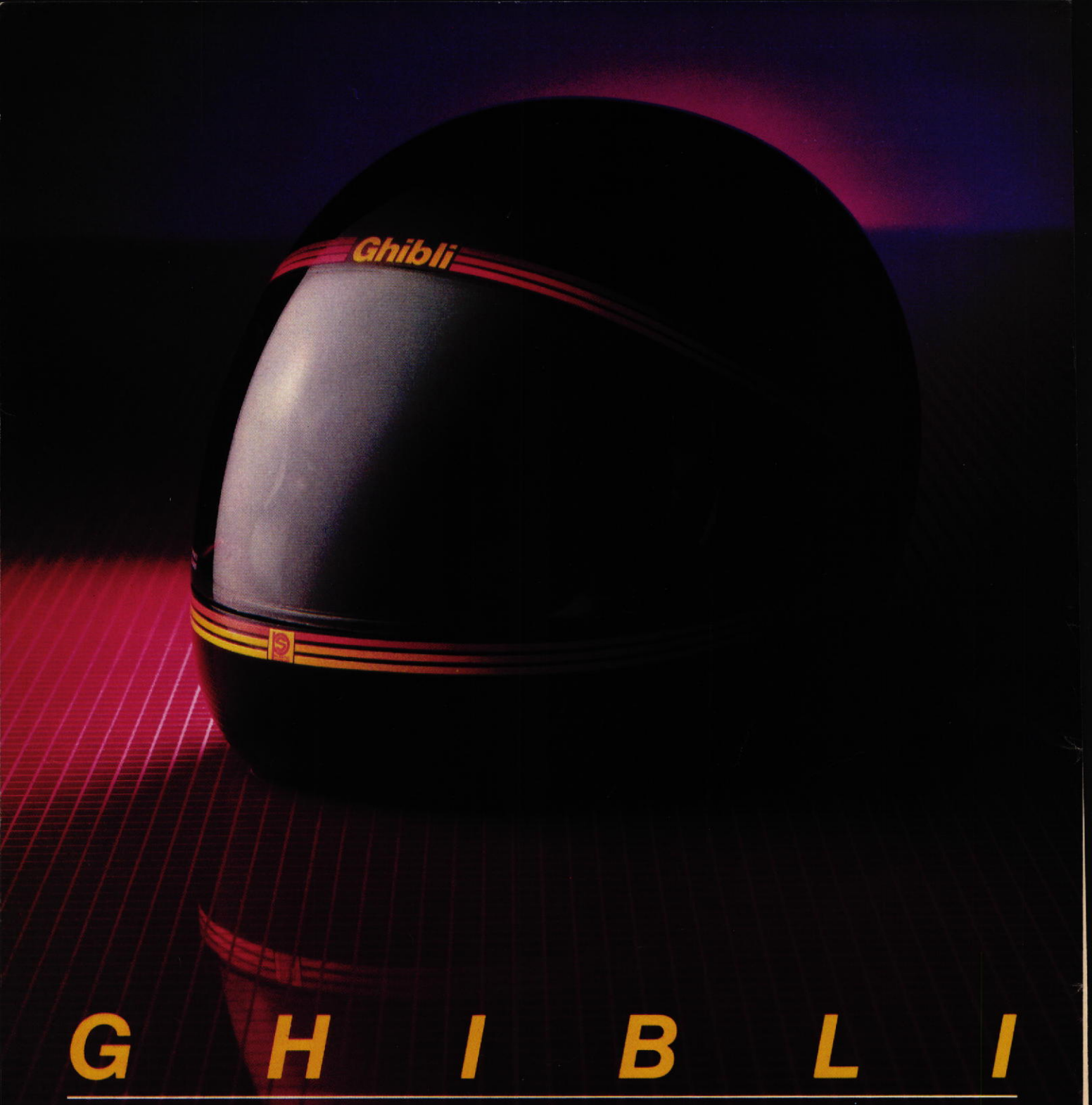

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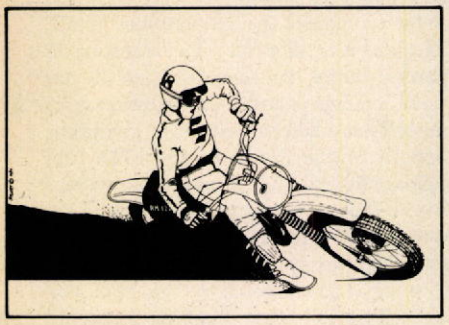

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OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS	HORSEPOWER @ RPM*		GEARS
Can-Am 250 MX-5	Jan. '79	Two-str.	10.8/10.0	218	32.1	8500	5
Can-Am 250 Qualifier III	Feb. '80	Two-str.	9.7/9.8	230	25.2	8000	6
Cam-Am 400 MX-6	June '80	Two-str.	11.5/10.8	233	38.3	6500	5
Honda CR125R	April '81	Two-str.	10.6/11.5	213	NA	NA	6
Honda CR250R	May '80	Two-str.	11.8/11.0	222	27.5	7000	5
Honda CR450R	Feb. '81	Two-str.	11.0/12.5	236	NA	NA	4
Honda XR185	March '79	Four-str.	8.0/7.75	221	12.8	10000	6
Honda XR500	May '79	Four-str.	8.5/8.6	273	25.8	6500	5
Husqvarna 125CR-'80	Nov. '79	Two-str.	11.8/11.8	214	18.8	11000	6
Husqvarna 250WR	Aug. '79	Two-str.	9.5/9.5	238	21.9	6500	6
Husqvarna 420AXC	Oct. '80	Two-str.	11.5/11.9	239	NA	NA	4
Husqvarna 430CR	March '81	two-str.	11.9/11.3	239	33.3	6500	6
Kawasaki KLX250	Sept. '79	Four-str.	9.8/10.5	239	15.2	8500	5
Kawasaki KDX175	Dec. '80	Two-str.	9.6/9.8	222	15.3	8500	6
Kawasaki KX125 A7	Jan. '81	Two-str.	10.4/11.3	207	20.9	12000	6
Kawasaki KX250	Sept. '80	Two-str.	11.3/11.2	233	26.8	8000	5
Kawasaki KX420	July '80	Two-str.	11.0/11.3	250	34.0	7000	5
Maico 400 MI	April '80	Two-str.	12.3/12.0	233	35.5	7000	5
Maico 450 MI	April '80	Two-str.	12.3/12.0	236	37.0	7000	5
Montesa Cappra 414 VE	Oct. '79	Two-str.	10.9/10.7	236	28.5	6500	4
Suzuki PE400	Nov. '80	Two-str.	11.3/11.3	250	30.9	7000	5
Suzuki RM125X	June '81	Two-str.	10.8/11.7	205	20.7	11500	6
Suzuki RM250N	May '79	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	218	27.1	8000	5
Suzuki RM400N	Sept. '79	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	229	28.1	7500	5
Yamaha Pro-Tec 600	Nov. '79	Four-str.	10.5/10.1	262	46.2	6500	5
Yamaha IT250G	Dec. '79	Two-str.	9.8/9.8	244	27.7	8000	6
Yamaha TT250G	Aug. '80	Four-str.	8.8/7.5	242	17.7	8000	5
Yamaha YZ250G	March '80	Two-str.	11.2/11.6	217	29.6	8000	6
Yamaha IT465	May '81	Two-str.	10.0/11.4	247	38.1	6500	5
Yamaha YZ465G	July '80	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	228	39.4	7000	5

*Horsepower shown is taken at the rear wheel and does not account for transmission losses between the engine and rear wheel. These results may differ from manufacturer's claims or from results obtained using a different dynamometer.

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R65	March '81	2C/G	14.16/92.1	110	423	45-50	133
BMW R100RS	May '81	2C/G	13.48/98.4	127	492	34-52	145
Ducati Darmah	Sept. '78	90-deg. 2D/F	13.41/97.5	118	487	25-40	120
Dunstall-Suzuki GS1000 CS	July '79	4A/F	11.32/117.0	154	488	37-54	124
H-D CLE Sidecar	Sept. '79	45-deg. 2D/F	17.60/69.3	91	1036	25-35	181
H-D Tour Glide	Sept. '80	45-deg. 2D/F	15.58/83.9	108	785	35-44	161
Honda CB400T Hawk	March '80	2A/F	14.37/88.6	100	391	51-65	139
Honda CX500 Custom	Aug. '79	80-deg. 2E/G	14.12/92.9	102	468	44-51	146
Honda CB650 Custom	Dec. '79	4A/F	13.10/99.8	113	447	44-52	131
Honda CB750F	June '81	4A/F	12.40/108.3	118	526	38-53	126
Honda CB750C	Nov. '80	4A/F	12.68/105.3	128	530	39-46	131
Honda CB900C	June '80	4A/G	12.44/107.9	132	588	37-44	155
Honda Interstate	March '80	4C/G	13.40/96.0	121	718	33-45	146
Honda CBX	May '81	6A/F	12.01/113.9	136	646	23-40	130
Kawasaki KZ440D	Feb. '81	2A/F	14.59/89.1	107	383	56-64	135
Kawasaki KZ550	Sept. '80	4A/F	13.45/97.1	103	426	37-51	150
Kawasaki KZ750	June '81	4A/F	12.43/108.2	128	471	38-60	128
Kawasaki KZ1000J	Feb. '81	4A/F	11.62/116.3	130	521	30-51	135
Kawasaki KZ1100	April '81	4A/F	11.62/117.6	140	559	38-44	NA
Kawasaki Z1-R	April '80	4A/F	12.24/110.6	130	552	35-48	131
Kawasaki KZ1300A GT	Sept. '80	6A/G	12.71/107.4	135	730	31-45	146
Laverda 1200 Jota	Dec. '78	3A/F	12.54/105.0	121	518	29-37	145
R.C. Turbo CB750F	Oct. '80	4A/F	11.99/113.8	NA	523	27-39	135
Suzuki GS450 ST	May '80	2A/F	14.09/92.5	100	397	55-57	127
Suzuki GS750EX	June '81	4A/F	12.26/108.6	128	525	44-52	130
Suzuki GS1000E	Aug. '80	4A/F	11.98/113.9	136	528	32-50	137
Suzuki GS1000G	Aug. '80	4A/G	12.34/110.8	139	564	30-51	141
Suzuki GS1100ET	April '80	4A/F	11.43/118.3	140	544	37-49	116
Triumph Bonneville Special	July '79	2A/F	13.94/96.2	110	411	45-55	175
Yamaha RD350LC	Dec. '80	Two-str. 2/AF	13.23/101.0	113	328	NA	126
Yamaha XJ550RH Seca	May '81	4A/G	12.99/101.7	121	418	44-55	119
Yamaha XJ650 Maxim I	June '80	4A/G	12.60/107.4	120	453	40-54	128
Yamaha XJ650	Nov. '80	4A/G	13.19/102.4	125	476	43-44	NA
Yamaha Seca 750	June '81	4A/F	12.26/108.0	128	495	44-56	134
Yamaha Virago	March '81	75-deg.2D/G	13.28/99.8	105	481	47-51	132
Yamaha XS850LG	Feb. '80	3A/G	13.10/101.7	116	548	42-55	144
Yamaha XS1100LH	Jan. '81	4A/G	11.99/113.5	130	562	41-46	133

*A-Transverse Vertical, B-Vertical, (single-cylinder only), C-Horizontally Opposed, D-Tandem Vee, E-Transverse Vee, /F-Chain Final Drive, /G-Shaft Final Drive, /H-Belt Final Drive

Editorial

Doing In The Double Nickel

Isn't it time that you played your part?

• Every time you fire up a street bike, you're paying. You begin shelling out long before you reach the freeway onramp, and you continue to pay after you've pulled off of the Superslab. Every sign with a 55-mph speed limit on it is a pricetag, and you pay in various denominations whether you want to or not.

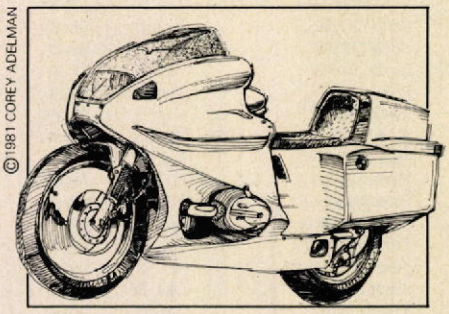
Perhaps you've taken it upon yourself to ignore the double nickel. To figure for yourself what the right speed for any given stretch of freeway ought to be. Often as not, if you're caught in that sort of determination, you start paying at an accelerated rate.

Or maybe you've long since given up caring about the double nickel. As improbable as it seems, maybe the seven years that have passed since the institution of the 55-mph national speed limit have left you passively disinterested in the whole situation. Perhaps you figure that with no solution in sight, what's the point in getting worked up about it?

But just suppose, for the sake of argument if nothing else, that there were some solution. An answer that would satisfy all parties. Not a solution to the greater problems of the world, certainly, but to the simple question of whether motorcycles and the 55-mph speed limit should be mixed. This little incentive plan has its flaws, as I'll be the first to admit, but just maybe there's something here worth considering.

Starting at the beginning brings the question of the national speed limit into sharp focus. It was designed—the safety bureaucracy in this country notwithstanding—to conserve a diminishing supply of fuel. Fair enough. Motorcyclists are as concerned with the greater petrofuture picture as any other population segment. But even allowing that the 55-mph limit saves gasoline, its application toward motorcycles and motorcyclists has never been right. It's as discriminatory as all get-out. It doesn't begin to take into account that you ride a machine that runs mpg-doughnuts around most of what the four-wheel world has to offer.

Think of those EPA fuel estimates for cars that get such prominent display these days. "Remember, use those figures for comparison only—your mileage may vary. In fact, highway mileage will be less." Now take a quick look at the fuel consumption figures in Cycle Guide's Cycle Guide. They show the highs and lows



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in fuel mileage that we achieved in the course of testing a wide range of motorcycles. The 40 mpg or so average that we squeeze out of most modern street bikes is generated under less-than-ideal circumstances: the real world as seen at speed. If you can't substantially better the mileage figures that we come up with, you either routinely ride the wheels off of your bike, pushing harder and faster than we do when we're testing out a new machine's limits, or your bike is sorely in need of a major tune.

Remember, though, that most of those figures relate to performance motorcycles, not vehicles designed predominately for fuel mileage. And while some economy cars surpass the mileage of performance bikes, most cars can't come close. In fact, according to some figures released by the Federal Highway Administration, a direct mileage comparison between cars and motorcycles isn't much of a competition at all. Despite the advent of high-mileage automobiles, the average mileage rating for the cars rolling along American highways and streets is on the low side of 14.3 mpg. Motorcycles, according to the report, routinely top the 50-mpg mark.

And where does that leave you? In a scheme of things where cars are the major consideration, paying for someone else's lousy fuel economy, is where.

Just as surely as if you were standing in a supermarket check-out stand, paying for items going into someone else's shopping cart, the national speed limit as it is enforced today has you paying out for someone else's fuel economy.

The solution is simple. What's needed is relief for the people who choose high-efficiency vehicles. You. Me. Just liberate all vehicles that get significantly better mileage than the national average from the burden of the double nickel. With motorcycles, the implementation of such a plan would be easy and practically free; there's just no way to confuse bikes with the lower-efficiency four-wheelers. And in the case of automobiles, assign the cars that qualify as fuel-stingy an identifying license plate—day-glo or something like it—and leave it at that. Call the new freeway speed limit for high-efficiency vehicles 70 mph, just for the sake of speculation. And call the whole thing a damn sight fairer than the system that's in effect right now.

Fiction, right? Pure fantasy?

And aside from that, there are significant flaws, of course. The most notable of which is that the idea isn't even remotely original. A federal transportation panel has already suggested just such a solution to the problem of the national speed limit. The idea is to allow all vehicles getting 25 percent better fuel economy than the national average to cruise the highways at 70 mph. That ought to mean, even giving the benefit of the doubt to the FHA fuel mileage figures, that a motorcycle averaging 18 mpg or better would get its ticket punched for an extra 15 mph on the Interstate highway system.

What is the impetus for this plan, you say? Why is it that Washington would want to smile in our direction, freeing us up for faster highway cruising?

There's the true beauty of this suggestion. Not only do you get the nod for an extra 15 legal miles per hour, you get to call yourself a patriot and a conservationist in the bargain. The end result of offering incentives for fuel-efficient vehicles, according to the transportation panel, is an overall shift toward higher-mileage transportation. It's simple enough: You dangle the carrot of 70-mph freeway speeds in the face of the general populace, and the day of the guzzler is over. Talk to the people in a language they understand—a quantifiable dose of personal freedom—and energy conservation is a snap. And such is the nature of this recommendation that the final tally shows a huge saving in gasoline—and in dollars leaving the country.

Well, I'm prepared. If it takes hitting the highways at elevated speeds in order to save fuel, who am I to complain? Who am I to say it can't work? I want to go on record right now: I'm ready and willing to do my bit as a rolling billboard for fuel conservation. And if riding faster will help even more, I'm ready for that, too.

—Larry Works

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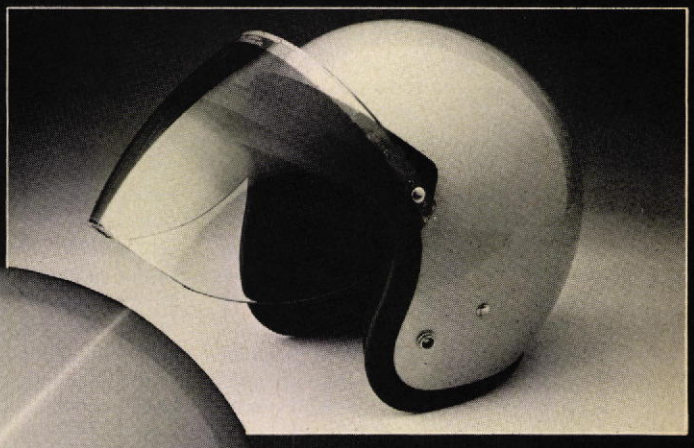

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"There I was, flamed-out and flat on my back at 20,000 feet, when this Buick started to edge into my lane . . ."

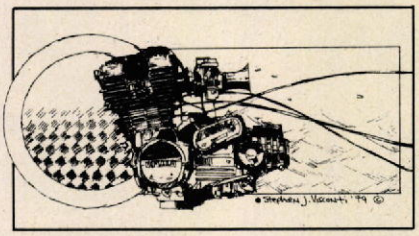
• We've all heard a million times how riding a motorcycle is the closest thing you can find to flying on the ground. How the steely-eyed squint of a fighter jock scanning for bad guys at twelve o'clock high is just like the scowl you wear when you hammer your GS1100 up to absolutely the very last inch of braking point before oblivion on Café Road. Yes, yes. A nice comparison, a tidy way of explaining to puzzled acquaintances at boring parties What It's Like On a Bike.

Thing is, though, there's a lot of truth in it all. When you analyze the world of the F-15 pilot and compare it with ours, some key points emerge. First, he, like us, lives in a hostile environment. He's got MiG-27s, SAM-7s, flak and clear-air turbulence to live with, and we've got old ladies in Dodge Darts, drunks in Corvettes and highly dubious radar devices. Second, he's in sole command of a highly strung piece of machinery, all trying hard *not* to fly—and the analogy to our exotica is obvious. Third, stacked up against the enormous forces trying to put him into a green body bag, all he's really got is his skill, tempered by experience and razor-sharp reactions. He needs all his faculties to survive and so do we. Make a mistake in a Grumman Tomcat at Mach 2.5 and it's your last. Just like too much throttle into the greasy hairpin on the cliff road.

We've got one more thing in common, too. At least, those of us lucky or smart enough to make it through our early days do: We both work best with a wingman. In air combat, a wingman is life itself: another pair of eyeballs; another weapons system to "scissors-kill" the bad guys; back-up help in an emergency.

And on the road? Different threats, maybe, but a wingman is still your best friend. If you've been riding long, and if you think, really *think,* about the geometrics of riding, the nature of your enemies and the way to maximize your own safety and efficiency, you'll see the parallel immediately. Maybe you don't, though. So let me convince you.

First, take the threats. They come in two classes: moving and fixed. One hits you, the other you hit. That's all there is—anything else isn't a threat. In the former category, the most common aggressors are automobilists trying to move into the space you're occupying. Sometimes they don't see you, sometimes they do—but



©1981 STEPHEN VISCONTI

they're trying to get even with all the demons that nag their lives, choosing a gentle bike-crunch as their own particular form of self-help. Whatever, your problem is the same: stop them from doing it.

Enter your wingman. First, the two of you ride spaced apart, roughly in the left and right sides of the lane. You're not side-by-side, but spaced so that you can see him fully in your mirror, and he can see your whole helmet in your mirror. This is a good separation, for another set of reasons too: you stay clear of the junk in the center of the lane, and the two of you use up far more linear feet of lane than one alone or two side-by-side. Thus your formation presents a far more formidable picture than a solo rider to the inattentive or mischief-seeking driver. Two bikes are easier seen than one.

So your wingman has a definite psychological value in keeping the threats from you; he makes you more visible and less available to harm. Think of it this way: The bad guys have to get him before they get you. Ruthless, but true. And further, given the confused image most automobilists who might bunt a biker have of that biker—based as it is on "The Wild One"—the fact that there are two of you will have a deterrent effect on said automobilist. In other words, he may get one of you, but there's always your wingman. . . .

Riding with a wingman pays off in the twisties, too. There, your biggest problem is likely to be an unknown road beckoning all too sweetly for you to play Mr. Roberts Goes to the Nürburgring. I know and you know you're not likely to resist the urge, so what you need is a tactic for survival. In this case, whoever is up front plays wingman, and you can vary your rearward distances just so that watching him choose lines—and what happens when he does—gives you a clue to the dangers of the road: gravel, dogs, sheep, bumps, oil, water, alarmingly decreasing radii, the works. Your job is, then, to keep him in sight but still leave enough room for him to go down without your hitting him. This distance will, of course, vary with speed, terrain, and weather. But you have to think about it all the time, or else you'll both encounter the same threat to no good purpose—and somebody has to be the picker-upper.

Developing a thorough set of hand signals turns riding with a wingman into a much more rewarding process. The CYCLE GUIDE staff has worked out a basic Hand-speak system over the years that allows any two of us to communicate anything from "that cop has radar" to "the photographer needs another pass."

Put all this together and you come up with a new way to have fun. Let's face it: unless you have the world's most interesting road and/or scenery in front of your fairing, a lot of riding is just eating pavement—and it's in that mode that you need your brain and wingman most. Keeping your station with him can debore the worst Interstate, and in dense traffic can actually speed your passage: your two headlights weaving through the stacked-up cars' mirrors draw attention to your progress; the cars tend to spread a bit to allow you room. This obviates splitting lanes (never a safe practice, and almost always an illegal one) but gives you the same hot-knife-through-butter slice through the four-wheelers.

Paul Dean and I *always* ride this way. We've made a science out of predicting each other's habits and riding quirks on the road; we thus know exactly how the other will react in an emergency. We never get in each other's way, but always speed the other's passage—for courtesy is the single unbreakable rule when dealing with your wingman. If you look out for him, see, he'll look out for you.

If you're the way I was when I first began riding almost two decades ago, this will no doubt all seem a little contrived. If so, that's too bad. I've done it both ways, and as far as I'm concerned, a long trip without a wingman is not a pleasant prospect. I enjoy truly solo jaunts as much as any moto-cowboy, but I've now survived enough close calls to know the value of a wingman. In fact, the hostile environment we face has actually gotten more hostile in my riding lifetime—and while I might be able to deal with the Red Baron's Buick on a one-to-one basis, those SAMs coming up from six o'clock change the game entirely.

—*Steve Thompson*

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Techspeak

Riding a 36-Regular

Tailoring a motorcycle to your needs.

• Your motorcycle probably fits you as well as a ready-made suit: Short in the leg, too long in the arms and a little uncomfortable in the seat. But unless you had the bike made-to-measure you probably can't expect a better fit. And you can't ride back to your local dealer to have him turn up the footpegs and take in the handlebar. No, you're stuck with a loose fitting motorcycle designed for what the Society of Automotive Engineers calls the 50th Percentile Male—a mythical creature with the 41 vital measurements of the average American male.

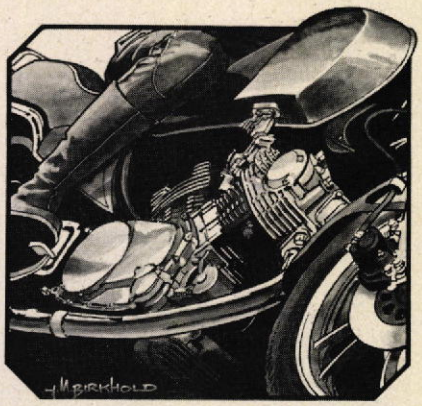
With over 100 million guys out there it's almost pure chance if you happen to fit your bike perfectly. Yet it is amazing just how well most people conform in many ways to the engineer's "perfect compromise." Still, though you probably won't need a second fitting, you certainly will want to tidy up your bike's ragged edges so it feels like it was made for you.

Indeed, most of a motorcycle's discomfort problems come from poor assembly rather than any compromise in design. Even some of our test bikes, assembled by the importers, arrive with less than a perfect set-up. So it's not surprising if the young kid down at the local dealer did not get your vital statistics properly dialed into your new bike.

The final trimming and pressing of your bike's parts is left squarely up to you. Some of these alterations will make the bike conform to your particular shape, but many more changes are necessary no matter what your size. These are the essentials of any set-up which, all too often, are left undone.

A rear brake pedal, for instance, should be in the same position whether you are six feet tall or five-one. It needs to be, but rarely is, at a point where your foot can slide inward along the footpeg until it covers the brake. Most motorcycles are not like this because the kid down at the shop set the pedal too high. And when it is too high you have to lift your foot off the peg to press the pedal, no matter what your size. Worse still, your foot can't rest on anything while you press the brake, so precise control is greatly reduced. And, like wearing a tight pair of shoes, the effort is fatiguing.

The shift lever, too, should be useable without moving your foot from the peg. And the only way your size alters this is in getting enough clearance between the top



of your foot and the underside of the lever. Yet even that distance does not alter significantly between a size-twelve or a size-six foot. A good general rule is that the lever should be just below the level of the top of the footpeg. In that position your ankle will be rotated slightly down, giving you plenty of leverage to upshift. And it also means that, like the brake pedal, you will be able to slide your foot over the lever without lifting it off the peg.

These two changes alone will make the bike fit you better, but it might still feel a little strange in the arms. You can alleviate some of that discomfort by positioning the hand levers where they really work best. Again, a general rule suggests that both the clutch and front brake levers be positioned so that your outstretched hand on the lever keeps your arm and hand in a straight line. If you have to bend your wrists either up or down you won't be able to exert as much pressure on the lever, and after a few miles both wrists will tire.

But, as with all rules, there are exceptions, so when you are tailoring your bike remember that you are making it fit you and not the rules. If the levers don't feel comfortable with your wrists straight, move them. Swivel them around until they are comfortable, and don't just adapt to them. It's all too easy to get used to awkward control positions and end up looking—and feeling—like a 36-Regular in a 44-Long suit.

That's never more true than when the handlebar is not perfectly mounted. Many manufacturers give you a pretty good starting point by scribing a line on the bar which corresponds with a line on the handlebar clamp. But that is all it is, a starting point. Again, you must make the bike fit you, so rotate the bar until it feels right. It's usually easier to figure what *feels* right—rather than looks right—by closing your eyes and reaching out for the grips. If they don't fall immediately to hand the bar is not positioned correctly. And it might be that it never will feel right because the shape of a handlebar, more than anything, is a personal choice. Don't be afraid to change it if you can't get comfortable. After all, you might not be the perfect 36 Regular that the designers had in mind, and aftermarket handlebars are readily available.

You might not even have the perfect size hand to fit the manufacturer's grips because they, too, are fashioned for the average American. And while few riders realize it, the diameter of the handgrips can not only make the bar feel wrong, it can also cause fatigue. Having to close your hand tighter—or open it wider—than is comfortable makes a lot of difference at the end of a 300-mile day.

You might also find that your less-than-perfect hand won't easily bend to reach the horn or turnsignal switches. And with so many motorists out to put some fresh creases in your bike, an accessible horn can become more important than a comfortable clutch lever. So spin the switch body into the right position for you. This might call for some drilling of the handlebar, because many companies use locating pins to insure that universal 36-Regular position.

But, as we have already found, the manufacturers recommendations rarely fit everyone perfectly. Not even the suggested freeplay in control cables suits everyone. It's not a good idea to use less freeplay than recommended, but sometimes using more can alter the engagement point of the clutch so that it is easier to work with. The same is also true of brake cables on dirt bikes, where having the front brake close to the bar can allow you to two-finger to a stop while still working the throttle.

You won't find information like this in your owner's manual because the major manufacturers didn't build the bike just for you. It was built for Mr. Average, and you now know there is no such thing as an average motorcyclist. We are all very different, so next time your dealer asks you what size bike you are looking for, tell him a 44-Long. He might not have what you want on the rack, but with some careful tailoring you will be able to cut it to fit.

—David Dewhurst

California Accessory Warehouse

Vetter

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complete

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	410-18	51.95			
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RB-2	350-18	$51.95	**K112**	510-16	$62.95
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HST	510-16	$63.95	**GTII**	510-16	$62.95
rear	510-17	65.95	rear	510-17	64.95
	400-18	64.95		400-18	58.95
	425-18	66.95		450-18	60.95
	475-18	67.95		510-18	64.95
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West's Side

The Lady's Not A Flasher

She loves me not . . . she loves me.

• The bike was sulking. It wouldn't do the things it was expected to do — things it had always done without hesitation or protest. When I checked the turnsignals, for instance, the yellow flasher light indicator didn't blink on and off. It just went dim orange and stared sullenly back up at me. And in so doing, it made the bright green neutral indicator next to it go so dim that it was nearly extinguished. The turnsignals themselves didn't even glow. The bike was was having none of me.

Well, *almost* none of me.

Like a coquette with hurt vanity, the bike was making sure I noticed its disapproval, yet also letting me know it hadn't given up on me entirely. Take, for example, the way it had started. I'd kicked it several times, using the compression release, just to remind the crankshaft what "rotation" meant. Then, on only the second try, it caught and came to immediate smoky life. Even when I use the bike every day, I can't bank on *that* happening. After letting it sit unused for three-and-a-half months through the dead of winter and early spring, though, the way it started right up caught me completely off guard.

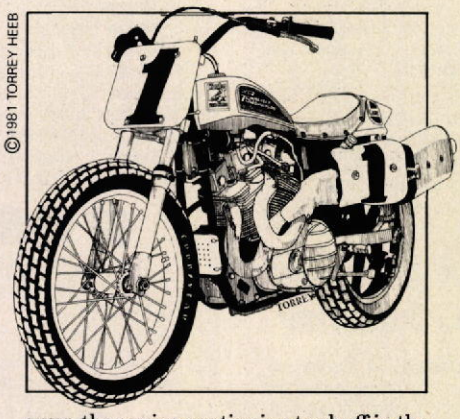
I'd long-since become an experienced courtier around this coquette, so I went on about my business as if everything was just ducky, blandly ignoring its temperamental behavior. After letting it idle for five minutes, I eased it into first gear and gently let out the clutch. Again to my surprise, the clutch cable released progressively and gradually. Usually, even after only two or three weeks of sitting in the garage, the cable would go sticky, then release in one sudden buck—three weeks was too long for this high-strung dame to be left alone.

But now, the cable slid freely. The bike was being cautious with me. It *wanted* me to ride it and was fulfilling all its basic mechanical functions to make sure I didn't just walk away from it again for another month.

Wise machine.

I rode the bike up out of the basement parking garage under a gray late-spring sky and parked it across the street. The engine note seemed to sound cleaner the minute we were outside in the fresh air. Couldn't blame it, really.

I checked the chain tension and found it loose, shockingly loose. I couldn't *imagine* having let it get so loose! I took up no less than seven flats before the chain was



snug, the engine continuing to chuff in the fresh air and—was I deceiving myself?—sounding more and more pleased with its lot. But seven flats, for God's sake! The bike had every reason to be irritable with me, it had been abused and abandoned. And now here I came, months later, expecting it to be glad to see me!

Still, I went on about my business, not letting myself admit it, but I felt guilty.

If I let it show, though, I knew it was an open invitation for this hurt damsel to punish me further. Never apologize to hurt vanity, I knew—cajole, be warm and maybe it'll forget it's hurt. Display great good faith, that's the ticket.

So against my better judgment, I climbed aboard and stepped it down into first again, eased out the clutch and blended into the mid-afternoon Manhattan traffic. Either there was more wrong with the bike than it was letting on and it would repay my inconstancy by going dead somewhere in Darkest Downtown, or it would forgive and forget and we could have a nice afternoon together.

The air was sharp with the last chill of spring as we cut crosstown. The muscles in my mid-spine were rigid with tension, a sure sign that I wasn't taking the bike's intentions for granted. I was genuinely nervous that something would quit.

But it seemed to be running beautifully—a bit clunky between shifts as the tranny oil unstiffened. (Or as my own ability to manipulate the shifter unstiffened.) Like a cat at a mousehole, I listened for warning signs of engine trouble, but the steady vibration rising up through the bike told me that, so far, everything was fine.

So, warily, I tried it again—switched on the left turnsignal. I got that same sulking, screw-you glimmer back. The yellow light was dim and sullen and the turnsignal still wasn't lighting at all. The battery was very nearly dead, had every right to be. But I'd been running now for eight or so minutes. It should've begun to re-charge. My mind raced to conclusions. Maybe all those freezing months of disuse had ruined the flasher unit. Maybe the flasher's contact points had fallen in love with each other, never again to part.

I rode on, feeling heartless. How could I have let this happen? This bike had never let me down—well, no more often than was to be expected from the breed. Heartless and lazy, I felt—a typical big-city slob letting his machinery rot under him like the subway system.

I was halfway down the West Side Highway now at 42nd Street, headed for the World Trade Center at the foot of the island. The twin towers hulked immensely on the horizon. If only we could get that far, the bike and I. If only it would forgive me that long . . .

It plunked on without missing a beat, the brakes crisp as ever, throttle response torquey and brave, urging me to slice through the cabs and New Jersey commuters. The farther we went, the faster the bike urged me along. I obliged, too ashamed of myself now to argue. The towers of the Trade Center passed by on my left like God's Own Goalposts, but the bike ignored them—no big deal. We went around the tip of the island past the Staten Island Ferry, beginning to enjoy ourselves, beginning to remember other afternoons, other rides together.

We were headed north again up the East Side Drive, the big 500 single carving a path through the cars with gruff power. We raced along, dropping from fifth to fourth, back up to fifth, skimming the brakes, gassing it again, the cool air rushing around us like the fast-running waters of a mountain creek. There were two cars side-by-side ahead, a cab and a Chev, and as I gassed it crossing lanes, instinctively I hit the flasher button. It took a second for me to notice, the cab and Chev disappearing quickly behind us, but the yellow flasher light was winking up at me, winking and winking. All was forgiven. The long, battery-killing winter was over, summer was coming, and my XT and I were friends again, slashing through traffic with thoughts of the warm months ahead, months to ride again together like free animals set loose on the wide, high plains of home.

—Ted West

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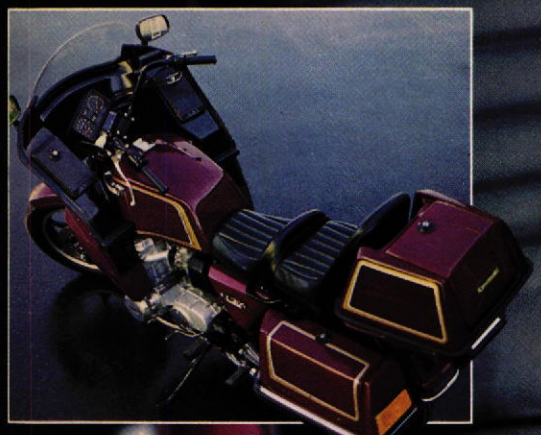

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How to move up to a bigger bike without a bigger bank account.

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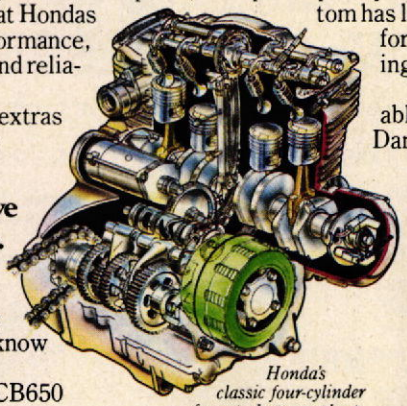
And gracefully integrated pull-back handlebars, a sleek teardrop tank and a low slung saddle.
Plus functional aluminum-alloy ComStar™ wheels and fat tubeless tires with raised white letters.
And four gleaming megaphone pipes in the back to tell the world that you're coming down the road.
Now look on the left hand page to see if your imagination is as good as Honda's.

You get what you pay for. Performance.

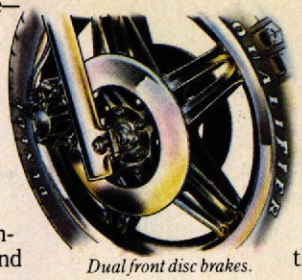
But looking at a motorcycle is only half the fun.
The other half is riding it.
Press the electric starter of the CB650 Custom and listen to the engine.
It's a 627 cc classic Honda four-stroke, four-cylinder engine—legendary for power and reliability.
Complete with a compact automotive style alternator to reduce engine width for extra cornering clearance.
New for this year, it's hooked up to four 26 mm constant velocity carburetors and an accelerator pump for smoother throttle response. And less throttle return spring pressure.
The handling complements the powerplant perfectly. The CB650 Custom has leading axle air-adjustable forks with Syntallic™ bushings up front.
And five-way adjustable Variable Hydraulic Damping™ shocks in back.
All in all it's a package that allows you to arrive in style.
And arrive early.



Honda's classic four-cylinder four-stroke powerplant.

Less tinkering, more riding.

There's more than one way to pay for a motorcycle.
Because after you buy it, you've still got to maintain it.
And that's where the CB650 Custom may have another advantage.
After more than a decade of building four-cylinder motorcycles, Honda has had plenty of practice making them as trouble-free as possible.
The CB650 Custom's ignition is a transistorized design that does away with points and the servicing that goes with them.

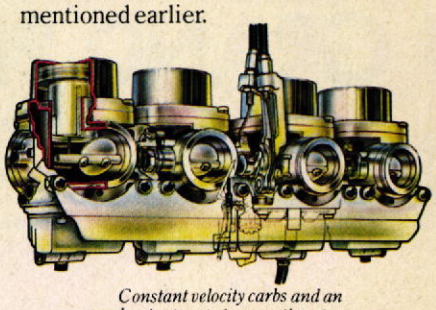


Dual front disc brakes.

Unlike spoke wheels, Honda's ComStars never need tightening or truing.
The dual disc brakes up front need no routine adjustment either. Because they're self-adjusting.
Even the chain has been designed to reduce fiddling. It's a high performance #530 sealed "O" ring that's internally lubricated.
When there is work to be done, many owners find that it's easy to do yourself. Take adjusting the valves, for instance.
Instead of requiring an expensive trip to the shop, it can be done with a couple of wrenches, and a feeler gauge at home.

And at no additional charge...

With the price you're paying for all this beauty and performance the last thing you expected was extras, right?
Wrong.
The CB650 Custom comes with the dual front disc brakes that were mentioned earlier.



Constant velocity carbs and an accelerator pump for smooth response.

And vibration-resistant mirrors and vibration-resistant passenger footpegs.
Plus a halogen headlight and full instrumentation.
There's even a vacuum-operated fuel petcock that you never have to remember to turn off.
Which brings us to the best feature of all.
The kind of gas mileage you'll be thankful for year after year.
Just one more way the CB650 Custom can help keep your bank account where it belongs.
In the bank.

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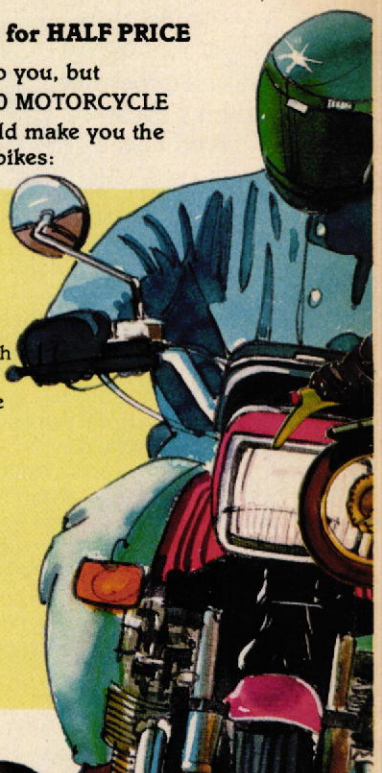

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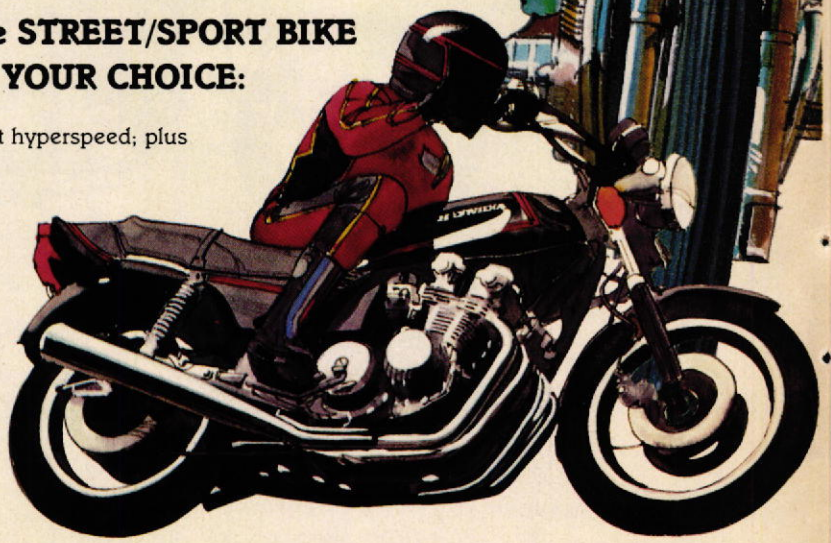

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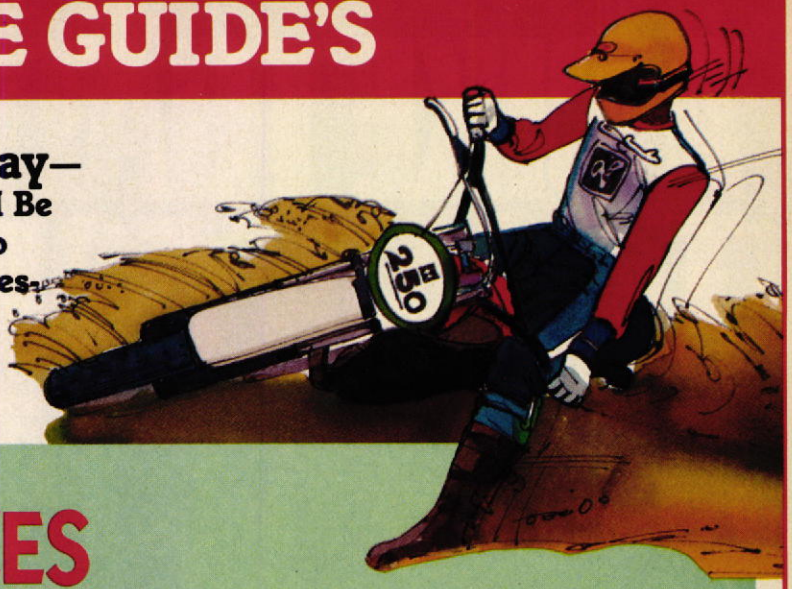

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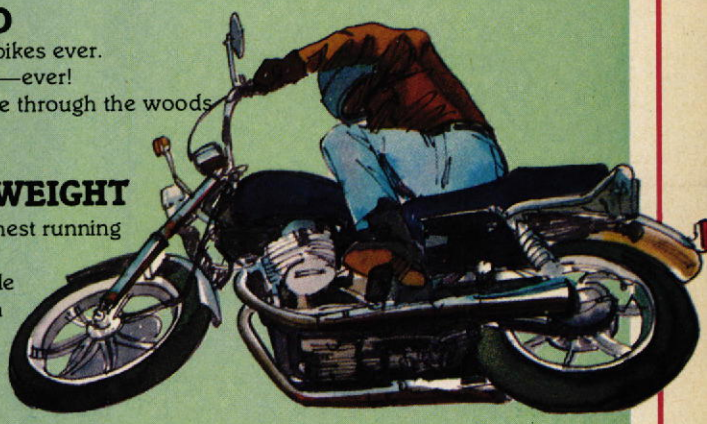

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5. Only 1 Major Prize per household. Substitution only upon mutual agreement of prize winner and participating dealer for motorcycle of equal value.
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7. A list of major prize winners will be available after December 1, 1981.

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY RILEY THARP

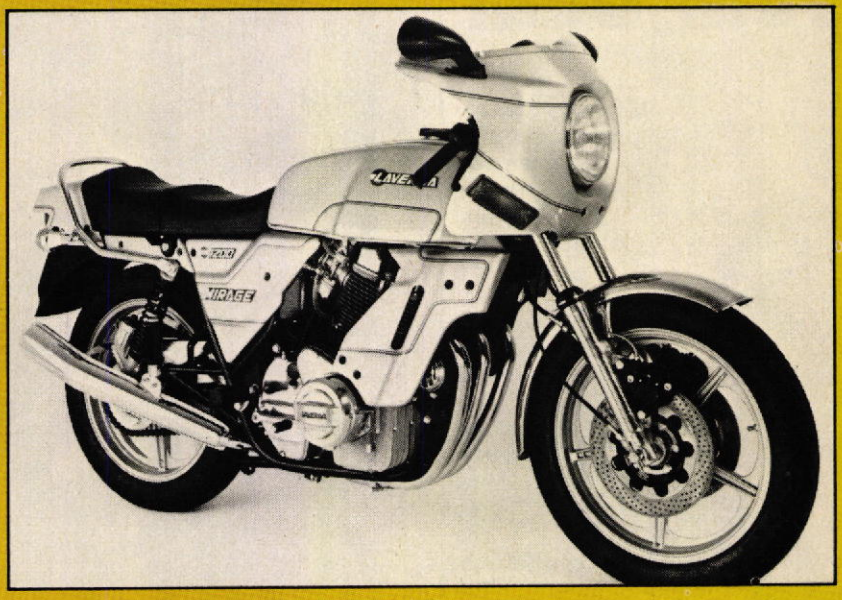
COMING SOON

• There are some motorcycles that seem to exist just to defy empiricism—to prove that they are more than a collection of data and facts. Italy is known for producing its share of **rogue** bikes which sometimes emphasize *machismo* over modernity. For some riders, these bikes are shining testaments to their individuality.

One marque which embodies these traits is **Laverda.** Its latest offering is the Mirage 1200, which is a highly refined version of the three-cylinder Jota 1200. The Mirage has a number of mechanical changes which maintain **performance** while meeting EPA requirements. New cams with milder profiles are claimed to reduce exhaust noise, and larger intake and exhaust valves offset the reduced breathing time. A new airbox flows better than last year's, while reducing intake noise. The Bosch CDI ignition has been moved to the left side of the engine, and a much smaller Nippon-Denso alternator spins on the left end of the crankshaft. The reduction in engine width means more lean angle can be generated by the Pirelli Phantom tires.

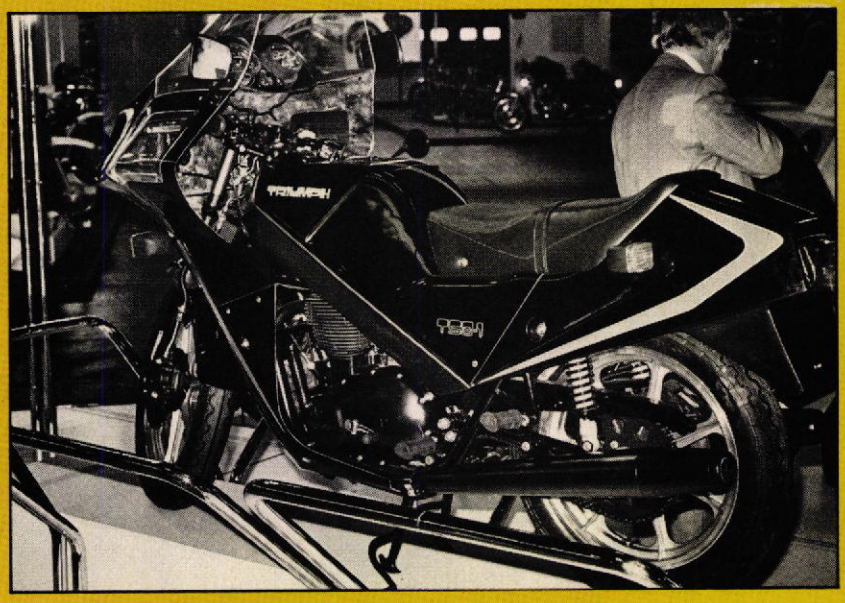
Fully-adjustable Marzocchi shocks are fitted to the 528-pound Mirage, and Laverda-made alloy wheels are also standard. New bodywork helps make the silver Mirage an attractive **alternative** to mainstream motorcycling.

• Of all the bikes introduced at the Birmingham Motorcycle Show in England, here's one that certainly deserves a closer look. Triumph appears to have taken several steps **forward** with its introduction of the new TS8-1. The 750cc twin is full of styling and mechanical features never before seen on a Triumph. An all-new **eight-valve** cylinder head is patterned after the Westlake racing design. To cope with the claimed 60 hp generated by the new head, the engine's crankshaft and other bottom end components have been **strengthened.** The TS8-1 sports a new frame designed by Bernard Hopper, who designed the Norton Isolastic frame. The new Triumph chassis has the engine and swingarm assembly mounted in rubber to reduce vibration. The frame was originally designed for the new police model, but will now be used on this civilian version which is scheduled for **production** this fall. The all-black TS8-1 comes with a full fairing that appears to be inspired by endurance racing bikes, complete with twin headlights and a streamlined tail section. England is experiencing a flurry of motorcycle activity of late, and the TS8-1 should help Triumph face new challengers.



Laverda's 1200 Mirage is the hyperbike for Latin lovers

A rogue by designer's fiat, it Romes U.S. shores.



Triumph's new TS8-1 features eight-valve head, rubber engine mounts and a fairing

Is a smooth, fast, stylish Triumph still a Triumph?

• When most Americans think of **Peugeot,** they visualize strangely styled diesel automobiles. But that image could quickly change if the French car giant upholds its intentions to become a major **force** in motorcycle manufacturing. The director general of the Peugeot-Citroen conglomerate is an ardent bike **enthusiast,** and he has firmly stated his company's intentions to **challenge** the Japanese domination of the French motorcycle market. Although Peugeot has been selling mopeds in Europe for a number of years, the

Continued

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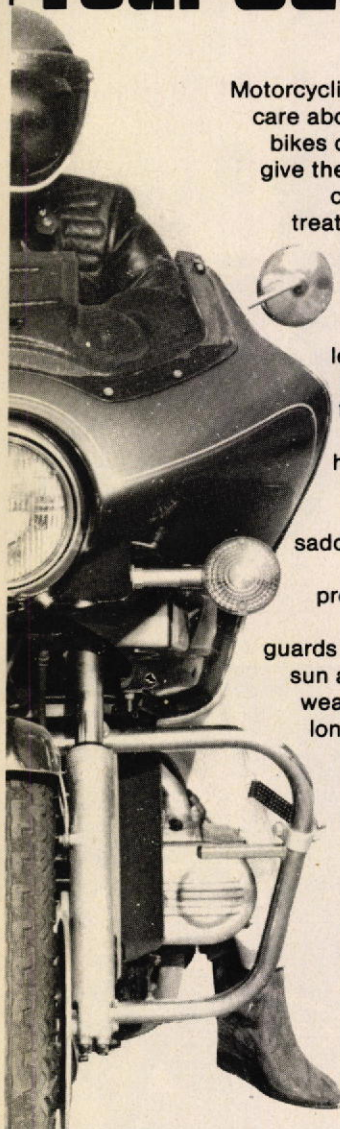

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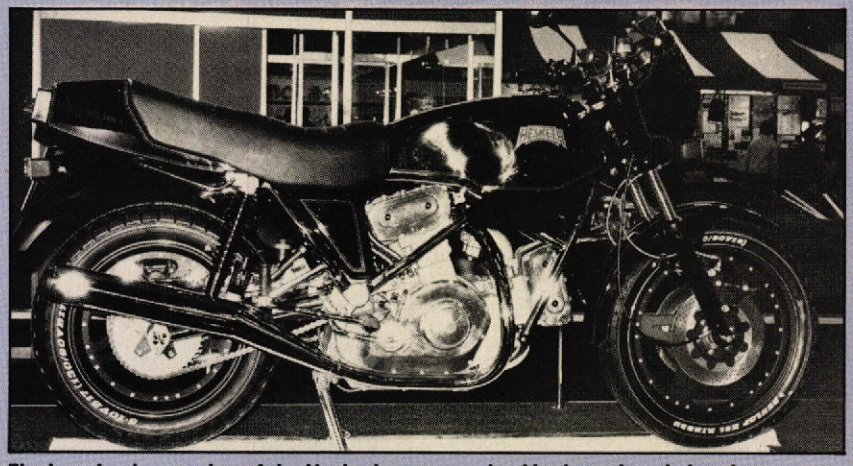
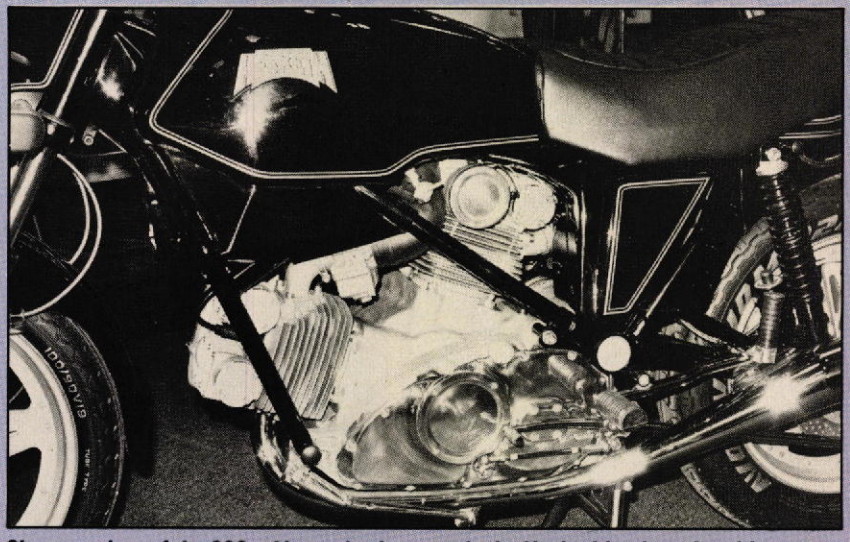


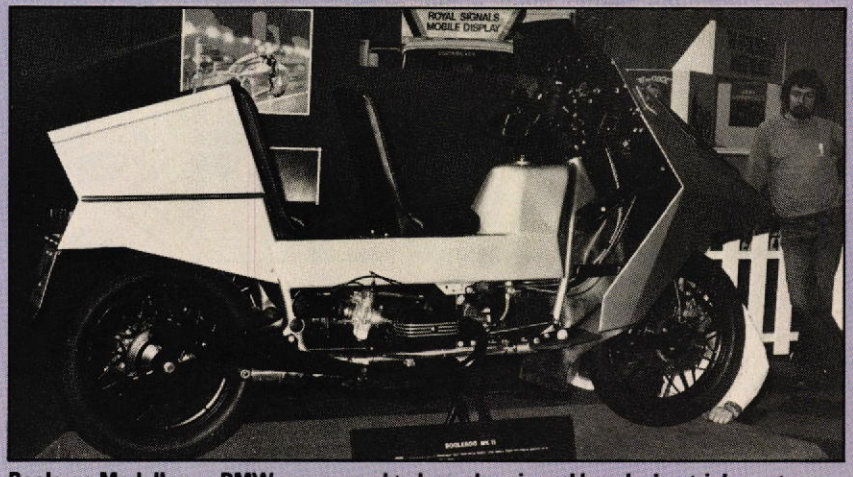
Final production version of the Hesketh sports revised bodywork and electrics

Japanese-made instruments and switches cannot deny its British heritage.



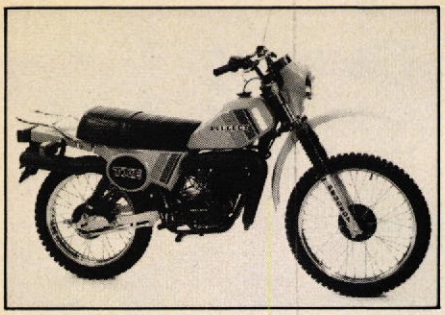
Close-up view of the 992cc Vee-twin also reveals the Hesketh's triangulated frame

Production of Lord Hesketh's finest begins in June, with bikes on sale August 1.



Booleroo Mark II uses BMW power, underslung chassis and has dual or triple seats

An answer to a question nobody asked, and how did we miss the Mark I?



Peugeot TXE 80 is a step beyond mopeds

Signaling its serious intentions.

TXE 80 dual-purpose bike is the first to go head-to-head with the Japanese. The 202-pound machine appears to be thoroughly modern with its aluminum swingarm, forward-mounted shocks and conical hubs. Whether by accident or by design, the TXE 80 looks a lot like Suzuki's dual-purpose machines. Other projects announced by Peugeot include the development of street-going, water-cooled twins. The high-performance two-stroke machines are said to utilize fuel injection and single-shock rear suspension. It sounds as if Peugeot is getting serious.

• Scrutinizing the **trends** in motorcycling helps to predict what the **future** might bring. One trend is toward more **power.** The average number of cylinders-per-bike in the U.S. has gone from 1.42 in 1970 to 1.92 last year, according to a Champion Spark Plug Company survey. Three- and four-cylinder bikes now represent 21 percent of all machines compared to just one percent a decade ago. Of the estimated 10-million motorcycles in the U.S., nearly half boast an engine displacement of 250cc or more. That compares to just 23 percent 10 years earlier.

• In spite of ever-increasing **fuel costs,** the same study shows that motorcycle usage has been **declining** since 1975. Today, the average street bike is ridden 2292 miles compared to 2511 miles only five years ago. It appears that bikers are **saving** energy by riding—and by not riding.

FEDERAL CASES

• If all the talk about government action has got you down, just remember that 1984 is around the corner. Consider the following statistic: Americans will spend **1.276 billion** hours filling out about 5000 different kinds of forms during 1981. That averages out to 5.5 hours for every man, woman and child. Think of it this way—if the Fed was stuck with a $12-per-hour charge for the work involved, the payroll would amount to over $15,000,000,000. Feeling **oppressed**?

• A Connecticut state legislator was recently **defeated** in his effort to pass a law that would have **doubled** the penalty for an auto driver at **fault** in an accident with a motorcyclist.

• Obtaining your motorcycle **license** could be less of a **problem** this year because of a new test course approved by the Motorcycle

Continued

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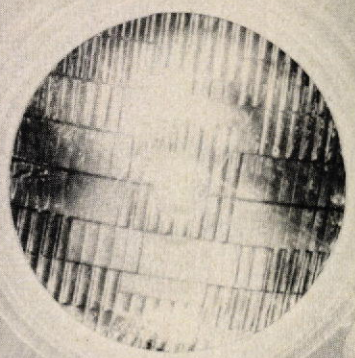


During daytime riding, a headlight pulsating about four times per second improves your chances of being seen by other drivers. Headlight modulators extend lamp life up to **three times.** This provides a savings of **$20 to $40 per lamp,** depending on the type of headlight you use. The modulated headlight uses **less current.** this means there's more power available for other accessories.

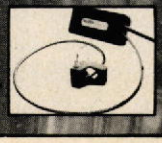
You get all this with the **Martek Flasher.**

What you don't get is an inconvenient bypass switch on an ugly box that's nearly impossible to mount.

Instead **Martek** gives you an **attractive handlebar mount switch** for convenient transition from daytime pulsating to constant nighttime beam. And the solid state electroninc can be easily hidden behind a sidecover, inside a fairing or wherever.

The **Flasher** works equally well with sealed beam or quartz halogen headlights and fits all **12 volt negative ground systems.** And the **Flasher** can be connected so the brake light pulsates too.

The **Flasher** comes with easy to follow installation instructions and a full **one year, no hassle guarantee.** For more information contact your local **Martek** dealer. Suggested retail price is $49.95.

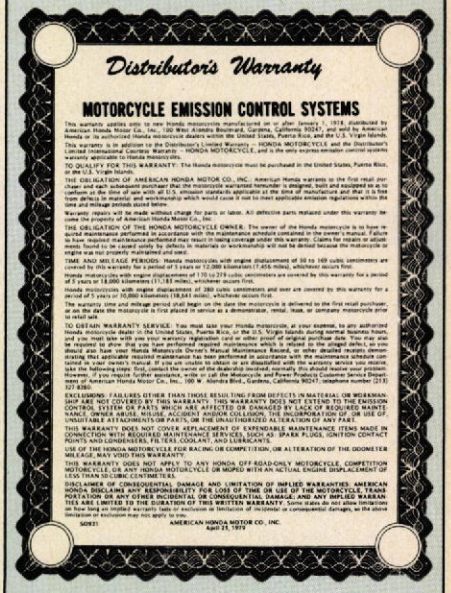


MARTEK Products, Inc.
3609 W. MacArthur Blvd.
Santa Ana, CA 92704

Reading the Fine Print

More about winning the warranty game.

• Once you decide to buy a street motorcycle, a paper blizzard begins. Loan applications, sales agreements and registration forms drift through your hands while your mind is distracted by fantasies of the open road. At some point you probably notice that one piece of the bureaucratic snowstorm is the warranty for your new scooter. But you might not realize that there is also a warranty on your bike's emissions gear—a warranty that substantially extends the term of your protection against defects in materials and workmanship for certain areas of your bike.



Distributor's Warranty

MOTORCYCLE EMISSION CONTROL SYSTEMS

This warranty applies only to new Honda motorcycles manufactured on or after January 1, 1978, distributed by American Honda Motor Co., Inc., 100 West Alondra Boulevard, Gardena, California 90247, and sold by American Honda or its authorized Honda motorcycle dealers within the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This warranty is in addition to the Distributor's Limited Warranty — HONDA MOTORCYCLE and the Distributor's Limited International Courtesy Warranty — HONDA MOTORCYCLE, and is the only express emission control systems warranty applicable to Honda motorcycles.

TO QUALIFY FOR THIS WARRANTY: The Honda motorcycle must be purchased in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

THE OBLIGATION OF AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO., INC.: American Honda warrants to the first retail purchaser and each subsequent purchaser that the motorcycle warranted hereunder is designed, built and equipped so as to conform at the time of sale with all U.S. emission standards applicable at the time of manufacture and that it is free from defects in material and workmanship which would cause it not to meet applicable emission regulations within the time and mileage periods stated below.

Warranty repairs will be made without charge for parts or labor. All defective parts replaced under this warranty become the property of American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

THE OBLIGATION OF THE HONDA MOTORCYCLE OWNER: The owner of the Honda motorcycle is to have required maintenance performed in accordance with the maintenance schedule contained in the owner's manual. Failure to have required maintenance performed may result in limited coverage under this warranty. Claims for repairs or adjustments found to be caused solely by defects in materials or workmanship will not be denied because the motorcycle or engine was not properly maintained and used.

TIME AND MILEAGE PERIODS: Honda motorcycles with engine displacement of 50 to 169 cubic centimeters are covered by this warranty for a period of 5 years or 12,000 kilometers (7,456 miles), whichever occurs first.

Honda motorcycles with engine displacements of 170 to 279 cubic centimeters are covered by this warranty for a period of 5 years or 18,000 kilometers (11,185 miles), whichever occurs first.

Honda motorcycles with engine displacement of 280 cubic centimeters and over are covered by this warranty for a period of 5 years or 30,000 kilometers (18,641 miles), whichever occurs first.

The warranty time and mileage period shall begin on the date the motorcycle is delivered to the first retail purchaser, or on the date the motorcycle is first placed in service as a demonstrator, rental, lease, or company motorcycle prior to retail sale.

TO OBTAIN WARRANTY SERVICE: You must take your Honda motorcycle, at your expense, to any authorized Honda motorcycle dealer in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands during normal business hours, and you must take with you your warranty registration card or other proof of original purchase date. You may also be required to show that you have performed required maintenance which is related to the alleged defect, as you will find detailed in the Honda Motorcycle Owner's Manual. Maintenance Records, or other documents verifying that applicable required maintenance has been performed in accordance with the maintenance schedule contained in the Owner's Manual, may be presented to the dealer to establish proof of maintenance. If you do not have the foregoing documents, contact the owner of the dealership nearest you and explain your problem. However, if you require further assistance, write or call the Motorcycle and Power Products Customer Service Department, American Honda Motor Co., Inc., 100 W. Alondra Blvd., Gardena, California 90247, telephone number (213) 327-8280.

EXCLUSIONS: FAILURES OTHER THAN THOSE RESULTING FROM DEFECTS IN MATERIAL OR WORKMANSHIP ARE NOT COVERED BY THIS WARRANTY. THIS WARRANTY DOES NOT EXTEND TO THE EMISSION CONTROL SYSTEM OR PARTS WHICH ARE AFFECTED OR DAMAGED BY LACK OF REQUIRED MAINTENANCE, OWNER ABUSE, MISUSE, ACCIDENT AND/OR COLLISION, THE INCORPORATION OF OR USE OF UNSUITABLE ATTACHMENTS OR PARTS, OR THE UNAUTHORIZED ALTERATION OF ANY PART.

THIS WARRANTY DOES NOT COVER REPLACEMENT OF EXPENDABLE MAINTENANCE ITEMS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH REQUIRED MAINTENANCE SERVICES, SUCH AS: SPARK PLUGS, IGNITION CONTACT POINTS AND CONDENSERS, FILTERS, COOLANT, AND LUBRICANTS.

USE OF THE HONDA MOTORCYCLE FOR RACING OR COMPETITION, OR ALTERATION OF THE ODOMETER MILEAGE, MAY VOID THIS WARRANTY.

THIS WARRANTY DOES NOT APPLY TO ANY HONDA OFF-ROAD-ONLY MOTORCYCLE, COMPETITION MOTORCYCLE, OR ANY HONDA MOTORCYCLE OR MOPED WITH AN ACTUAL ENGINE DISPLACEMENT OF LESS THAN 50 CUBIC CENTIMETERS.

DISCLAIMER OF CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGE AND LIMITATION OF IMPLIED WARRANTIES: AMERICAN HONDA DISCLAIMS ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSS OF TIME OR USE OF THE MOTORCYCLE, TRANSPORTATION OR ANY OTHER INCIDENTAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGE; AND ANY IMPLIED WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR USE EXCEEDS THIS WRITTEN WARRANTY. Some states do not allow limitations on how long an implied warranty lasts or exclusion of incidental or consequential damages, so the above limitation or exclusion may not apply to you.

50931 AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO., INC.
April 23, 1979

This little-known warranty is the result of the EPA certification procedure every motorcycle built after January 1, 1978 must undergo. The manufacturer must warranty to the Environmental Protection Agency—and, therefore, to you—that its bike will conform to emission regulations for a specified minimum period of time. And that time period is far longer than the six or 12 months the manufacturer warranties the complete motorcycle.

Your bike's emissions warranty stipulates that defective components of the emissions system will be replaced without charge for parts or labor according to a timetable determined by the bike's displacement. Road bikes with engines of 50cc to 169cc are protected for five years or 12,000 kilometers (7456 miles), whichever comes first. Bikes displacing 170cc to 279cc are warrantied for five years or 18,000 kilometers (11,185 miles). And motorcycles with engines larger than 280cc are covered for five

years or 30,000 kilometers (18,641 miles).

As you've doubtlessly guessed, you must have your bike serviced at recommended intervals to qualify for this coverage. And you naturally cannot modify your bike with what the emissions warranty calls "unsuitable attachments or parts, or the unauthorized alteration of any part." Even so, the emissions warranty can protect you from any failures in a vulnerable part of your motorcycle for a far longer time than the motorcycle warranty itself.

The problem is, there are no hard and fast guidelines as to what exactly constitutes your bike's emissions control system. Although the Federal government compels all automotive and motorcycle manufacturers to make this warranty, it concerns itself only with the end result, not with the pieces involved. So it's hard to know if a valve, main bearing or exhaust pipe fulfills the definition of an emissions-related component as clearly as a positive crankcase ventilation valve fits the definition. That means that the customer and manufacturer usually must hammer out the definition between themselves, either over the phone, or sometimes in court. Generally, however, all motorcycle manufacturers follow California's definition of emissions gear, since it is the only state to define specific components.

California separates emissions gear into four areas; the fuel metering system, the ignition system, the positive crankcase ventilation system and miscellaneous items used in these systems. The fuel metering system is broken down as the carburetor (or fuel injection) and its internal components. The ignition system is defined as either the transistorized ignition/CDI, or the contact points, breaker base plate, lubricating pad and condenser. The ignition system also includes the generator, spark advancer, spark plugs, ignition coil, plug wires and plug caps. The PCV system constitutes the breather separator system, the storage tank and breather tube. Miscellaneous items include the tubing, fittings and clamps used in these systems. The warranty does not, however, cover the replacement of expendable items required at specific service intervals such as spark plugs, contact breakers, filters, coolants and lubricants.

As it turns out, the emissions warranty means that you might not be stuck with a huge repair bill should your bike's ignition or carburetors malfunction through no fault of your own. You can read it in black and white, too, since every dealer is required by the Magnuson-Moss law to provide you with a copy of your bike's emissions equipment warranty. It's a piece from the bureaucratic snowstorm that is worth having. After all—it might be the only thing that has come out of the government's regulations that can actually work to your advantage.

—Michael Jordan

Continued

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Safety Foundation for its Motorcycle Operators Skill Test. For states that don't have room for enough of the 50 x 125-foot facilities, an alternate course has been created for a 28x72-foot area. This should allow states to have more test areas than before. Indeed, the new method has been adopted by Kansas and New Hampshire, and is used as an alternate in Oregon, Washington and South Dakota.

• One source of good news could spring from the Republican platform plank calling for the **abolition** of the 55-mph speed limit. The idea is likely to be opposed by both conservationists and environmentalists, but since Reagan is a proponent of states' rights, the national speed limit could still be in jeopardy. A bill introduced in New Mexico, which would have raised the speed limit there to **65 mph,** died in the legislature because of the fear of losing federal highway funds. That's just the kind of federal **blackmail** to which Reagan claims he is opposed, but the indications are that the movement is off to a slow start. It's probably too early to start tinkering with gear ratios for autobahn-style cruising.

• The new man in the White House could affect other **changes** on motorcycling as well. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently stated that the EPA's noise standards for motorcycles will be some of the first regulations examined in an effort to **eliminate** those that are not cost-effective to meet or monitor. The AMA has stated that it is prepared to assist and advise the OMB in its efforts to **remove** inflationary and unreasonable aspects of the current EPA regulations.

HARD CASH

• A sad historical note concerns the news from Italy that the entire contents of the **MV Agusta** racing department are up for **sale.** For the asking price of around $500,000, the buyer will get several of the machines raced so successfully by Giacomo Agostini, John Surtees, Mike Hailwood and other greats. Also included is a **prototype** 500cc flat four which was under development when the factory withdrew from racing in the mid-Seventies. MV built the last four-stroke roadracers which were able to compete with the two-strokers. Count Agusta's finest are little more than **museum** pieces now, but it's a rare chance for someone to buy a slice of history.

• A money matter with less than **historical** value concerns the agreement between Yamaha and Pirelli for the use of Pirellis as original equipment tires on all TZ **roadracers.** The move is apparently part of Pirelli's effort to establish recognition as a serious racing tire supplier.

• Bad news for **British** bikers. A 10 percent **tax** is now being assessed on the wholesale price of all new motorcycles. And this comes in addition to the already severe value added tax structure. It's something to think about while you're standing in line trying to register your new machine.

Continued

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TRICKET FAMOUS NAME

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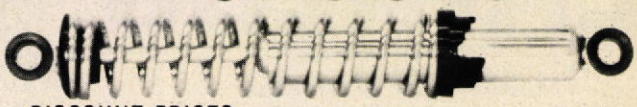

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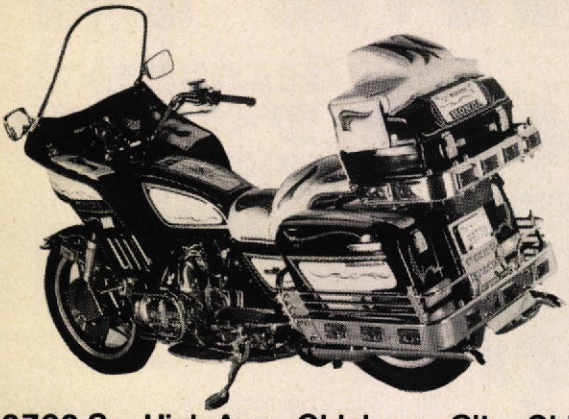

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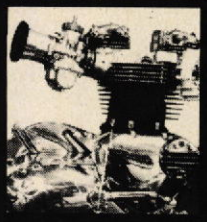

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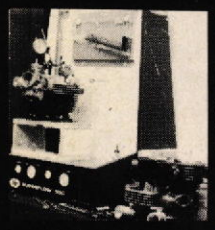

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Book Review

JUPITER'S TRAVELS
By Ted Simon
432 pages, $4.95
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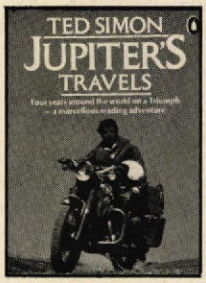

• To call "Jupiter's Travels" a motorcycle travelogue is to miss the point. This book goes deeper. It has little to do with bikes, and is a poor directory of how and where to ride. It is, rather, an intensely personal account of one man's encounters with this immense planet, and the equally complex universe within his own mind.

Ted Simon is a British-born journalist who, in 1973, set off to see the world. His transportation, a Triumph T100, was chosen simply because it seemed the most practical, portable and inexpensive way to circumnavigate the globe. Prior to his trip, Simon had only superficial motorcycle experience, so the book spends little time on the direct topic of touring by bike. Yet any rider will find pleasure in the joy that Simon expresses about the feeling of freedom while riding a motorcycle. But throughout most of the book, the Triumph is treated as little more than a tool—a means to get there.

That shouldn't stop the curious biker from enjoying "Travels." Just knowing that Simon gathered his vast wealth of experience and insight while on a motorcycle is enough to give the book some extra meaning. From the wide-open spaces of central Africa to a month in jail in Brazil, Simon touched the world in an intimate way. And he did it all on the back of his trusty Triumph.

However, there is one serious flaw within "Jupiter's Travels." The ending is a disappointing anticlimax, which could be due to Simon's personal difficulty in seeing the trip through to its end. As the four-year odyssey winds down, Simon is afflicted with tremendous fatigue that renders his final days little more than a survival mission. This seems to be reflected in his writings about the conclusion of the 64,000-mile journey, and it gives the book an undone and unsummarized feel.

If you begin the book expecting this letdown, then the journey with Simon is well worth taking. This is something less than a motorcycle book, and something far better than a travelogue. "Jupiter's Travels" is a chance to share the greatest experience in one man's life. —*Riley Tharp*

Continued

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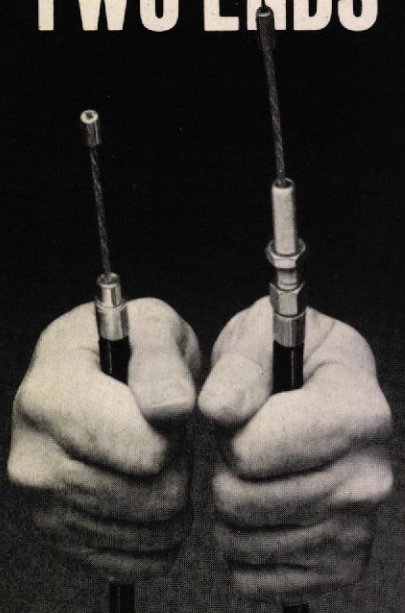

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RUMORS

• The Guide Lines "Rumors" section has a fine legacy. Diligence in **scraping** the carbon paper from the sides of corporate trashbins, **flirting** with secretaries in product research departments and sitting in the desert **contemplating** the future of motodom has produced some remarkably **prophetic** rumors, and a few that aren't so amazing.

Rumors are strange things. They come from anywhere and everywhere; from the manufacturers, from European sources, from the far East, and sometimes from hoary voices in the night. On occasion it seems that if enough people talk about a rumor, it just has to come **true.** And then it does. Consider some examples.

Stories were in the air, like the scent of rain in spring, of a shaft-drive Suzuki 650 over a year **before** it appeared in showrooms. Guide Lines told of a Honda 250 **watercrosser** when it was just a gleam in a salesman's eye. Evanescent **glimpses** of BMW's R80 GS could be read in "Rumors" over 14 months before its introduction. And so it was with Suzuki's GN400, the Moto-Morini Camel, the YZ465 from Yamaha and the Harley Sturgis. All started life as rumors.

Of course, we're still **waiting** for a few bikes to appear. Apparently, Honda hasn't seen the rumors about its resurrection of the CB400F. Nor has Yamaha seen fit to make good the rumors about a Vee-four 1200cc shaftie. And Laverda is holding out on its thumper dirt model. But then, rumors wouldn't be "Rumors" without the occasional **pot-shot.** This month there's a new batch of rumors ready to follow in the steps and misteps of their forerunners.

• Honda has reportedly **abandoned** work on its Vee-four 700 in favor of a model to **challenge** the Yamaha Virago. The bike might be done in conservative Custom trim in an effort to find a different market.

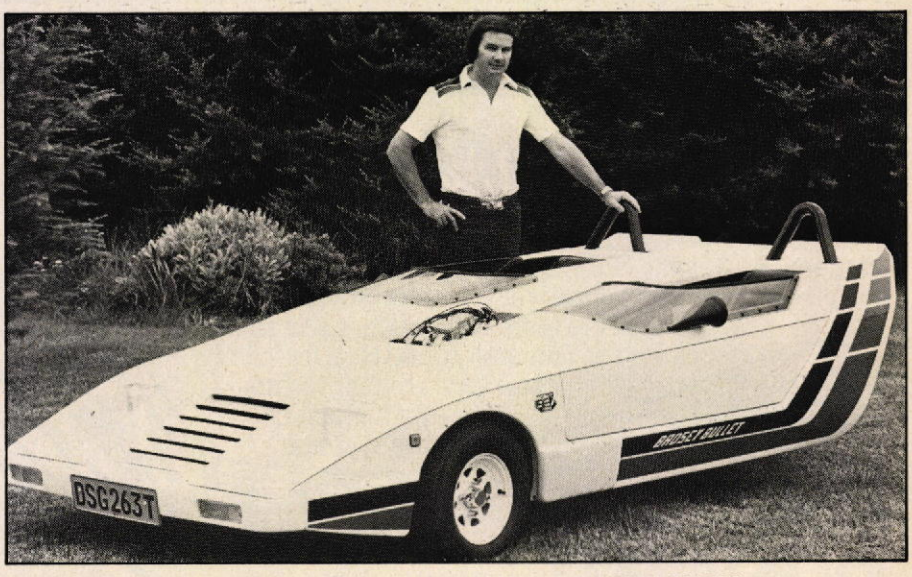
• Rumors of another Vee-special concern the impending introduction of a **Moto Guzzi** V50 Custom complete with pullback bars and a **teardrop** tank. While this is certainly a radical departure for the Italian company, it doesn't mean it will forget its racing heritage. In fact, a concurrent rumor states that the LeMans will soon undergo a cosmetic and mechanical **facelift.**

• For those who want to see what makes things tick, an aftermarket company is rumored to be developing see-through **plastic cam covers** for popular street bikes. Presumably, the splashing of oil and the spinning of cams won't prove to be too much of a **distraction.**

APART FROM THE CROWD

• Brazil is home to more than just **giant** tarantulas. It now boasts what must surely be the world's **largest** motorcycle. The Amazonas 1600 is powered by an air-cooled Volkswagen engine, and is said to weigh about 880 pounds. The machine is a mixture of all kinds of components, but even though it uses Harley brakes and an automobile engine, the chassis and lots of small pieces are Brazilian-made.

• Anything larger than the Amazonas should probably have more wheels, and lo there came the **Badsey Bullet.** This twin-cockpit sport vehicle starts its life as a Suzuki GS1100, and is then carved apart and remanufactured by South African boat racer Bill Badsey. The result is a **three-wheeler** which is claimed to have none of the strange handling characteristics of other three-wheeled vehicles. The Badsey's low center of gravity and ground-effects aerodynamics are said to keep it **stable** at all speeds. Badsey's car, er–bike, could be imported into the U.S. if licensing and distribution requirements can be worked out. For now, the Bullet will be sold exclusively in South Africa. •



South African boat racer Bill Badsey poses with his slightly modified GS1100

Twin-cockpit sports vehicle is slated for limited production.

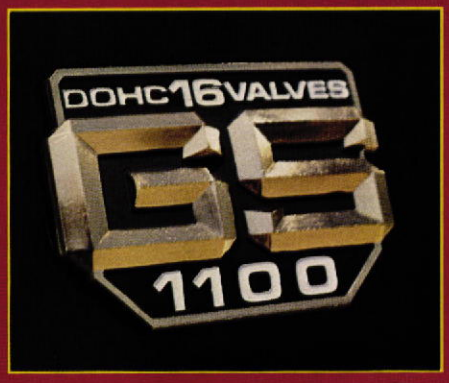
COMPARISON ROAD TEST:

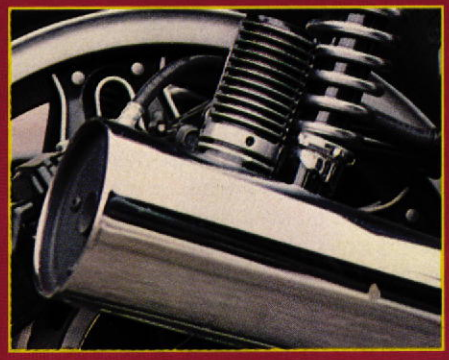
The Hyperbikes

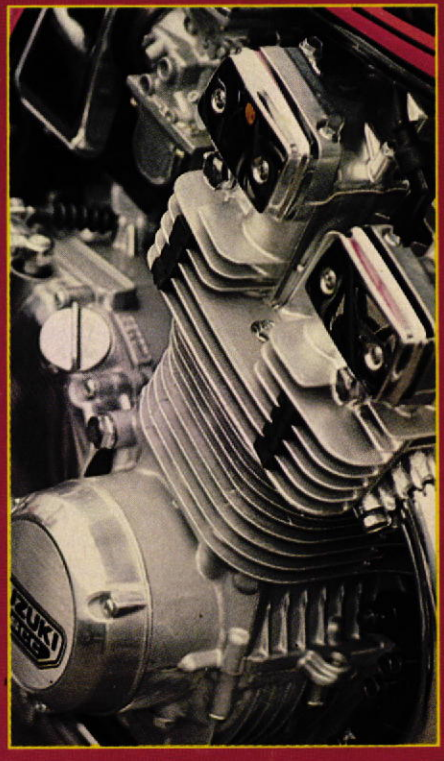
HONDA CB900F, KAWASAKI GPz1100, SUZUKI GS1100EX

Exploring the final frontier of speed.

BY RILEY THARP







PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DAVID DEVHURST

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PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 JIM COOK

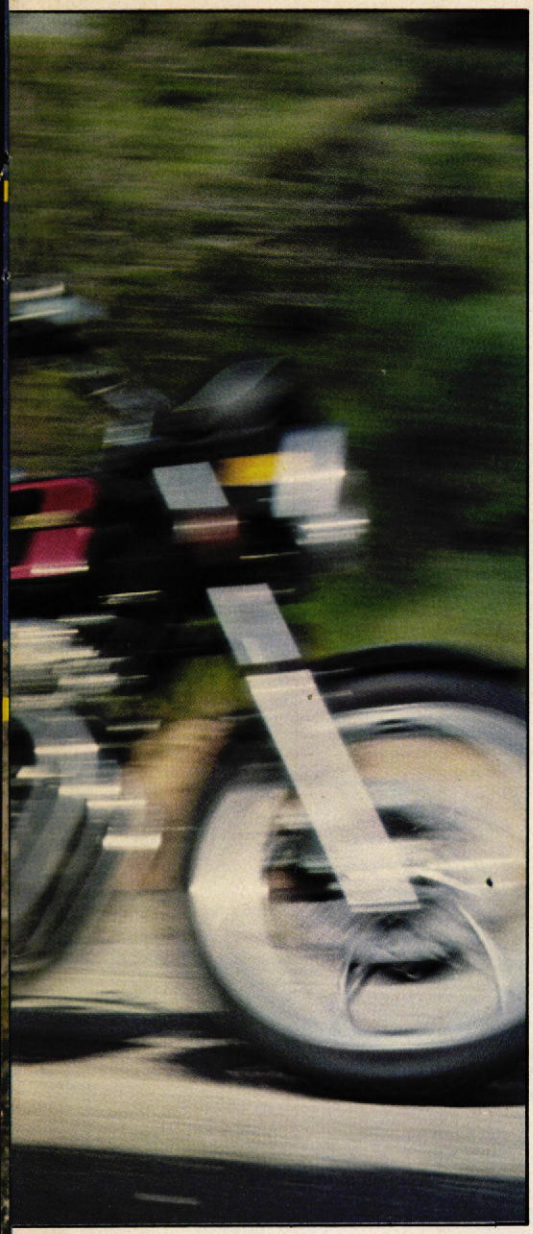
Hyperbike. Just the word conjures visions of contained fury and powerful forces—a bike that can propel you to the outer limits, the cutting edge of motorcycle capability. A hyperbike is by nature a collection of "mosts" and "bests," a standard-bearer for its manufacturer's commitment to two-wheeled performance.

Not too many seasons ago, that commitment went little further than high horsepower and low ETs at the strip. But natural selection has produced a new generation of machines: hyperbikes matured to a point that offers handling, comfort and power all in a single package. And since a variety of qualifications now define a hyperbike, a machine with a slightly smaller displacement, like Honda's new CB900F, can face off against the GS1100EX Suzuki and its new rival, the Kawasaki GPz1100.

Lording over the hyperbike class since its introduction in 1980 has rendered the GS1100 the obvious target for other manufacturers. Last year, the GS struck a balance of comfort, handling and speed that made it clear what other bikes would have to compete with to be the best. With the CBX metamorphosed into a sport tourer for 1981, the CB900F takes over as Honda's U.S. hyperbike entry, two years after its introduction in Europe. Its European debut coincided with Honda's string of successes in endurance racing using a similar machine, so riders in both Europe and America looked to the 900F as a less expensive yet capable alternative to the CBX.

Suzuki's other challenge comes from the Kawasaki GPz1100. From its earliest rumors, the GPz became the most talked-about street bike for 1981. As the lineal descendant of Kawasaki's high-performance heritage, the GPz takes the Z-1 concept three steps further in sophistication, displacement and appearance.

In striving to build the most capable hyperbike, Honda, Kawasaki and Suzuki have all drawn on remarkably similar thinking. All three bikes run transverse, four-cylinder engines with double overhead cams. Each engine in this shootout is equipped with, as design trends have come to dictate, electronic ignition and a four-into-two exhaust system. Power from each of the engines is transmitted through a five-speed gearbox and then by chain to the rear wheel. Each bike rides on a suspension comprised of an air-spring fork and externally adjustable twin shocks. The Honda, Kawasaki and Suzuki wheelbases all span nearly 60 inches, and weight, too, is another similarity; only 12 pounds separates the lightest—Suzuki—from the heaviest—Honda. Twin front discs and a



single rear disc do the stopping for each of the three bikes, and V-rated tires and quartz-halogen headlights are standard across the board.

Even though the hyperbikes share many basic design concepts, a closer look reveals some distinct differences. All of the machines have DOHC engines, but the Honda and Suzuki use four valves in each combustion chamber. The Kawasaki uses two valves per cylinder to perform the same task. All ride on non-wire wheels, but only the Honda's ComStar wheels are of non-cast construction. In one area of considerable mechanical divergence, the Honda and Suzuki feed their fuel thirsts through constant-vacuum carbs, while the Kawasaki uses fuel injection.

Divergence also is the key to how each of these bikes carves out its share of the hyperbike market. The 900F, for example, features the same sporty styling as its little brother, the CB750F. But the 900 announces its added performance with an all-black engine, an oil cooler and bold striping on its black paint. The 900 engine shares its origins with the CB750F, but unlike the 750, the 900 four rests in rubber mounts to minimize vibration. Both to cope with the 900's extra power, and because the engine isn't a stressed chassis member as on the 750, the 900 chassis uses 3.2mm-larger downtubes and extra gusseting around the steering head compared to the 750. The 900Fs fork tubes are a healthy 39mm, 2mm larger than the 750's and the largest of the hyperbikes. The front fork also has air assist with a balance tube, while the rear shocks are adjustable for spring preload and both rebound and compression damping. The 900 comes with a handlebar that is about one-half-inch lower than that on the CB750F, while the other control locations are the same on both bikes. A significant feature of the 900F is its price advantage over the other two hyperbikes—a pricetag $900 less than the GPz1100 and $500 less than the Suzuki.

If motorcycles always delivered what their looks promise, the GPz1100 would be a certain winner. The bike is a visual treat. Its bright red, slab-sided tank gives it a massive and purposeful look, enhanced by the matte-black engine and exhaust system. In fact, most of what is normally chromed on a motorcycle is finished in black, which gives the GPz an aggressive look. That look drew crowds wherever the GPz went, from freeways to the *CG* shop, where even jaded editors jostled for a closer view. The entire styling scheme is similar to that of the Moto-Guzzi LeMans, and the GPz's sporting control location amplifies the racy look. The GPz is fitted with a low bar that angles the rider's body forward over the 5.7-gallon gas tank. To maintain ergonomic proportions, the footpegs are located about three inches behind and an inch above the location on the standard KZ1100. Propelling this package is an engine that is based on the shaft-drive KZ1100 mill (see April '81 issue), but more valve lift and duration, along with electronic fuel injection (see EFI story page 44) give the GPz more punch than the touring version. The front fork has air assist sans balance tube, while the shocks have seven spring preload detents and five choices of rebound damping. Despite its exotic looks, the GPz represents new marketing approaches rather than new technology; with the obvious exception of EFI, most of the pieces of the GPz are refinements on Kawasaki's proven bits.

Suzuki's GS1100 attacks the hyperbike market from a different angle. Its styling is by far the most conservative of the group, yet beneath its metal skin lurks some surprising performance. The GS motor incorporates four valves in each Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber (TSCC), and the valves are actuated by stub rockers with easily serviced screw-type adjusters. The suspension is also readily adjustable with air assist, four damping settings and four spring preload notches up front, while the shocks offer four-position rebound damping adjustment and five-way adjustable spring preload.

There's the field; three bikes poised for wheel-to-wheel action. And action is what

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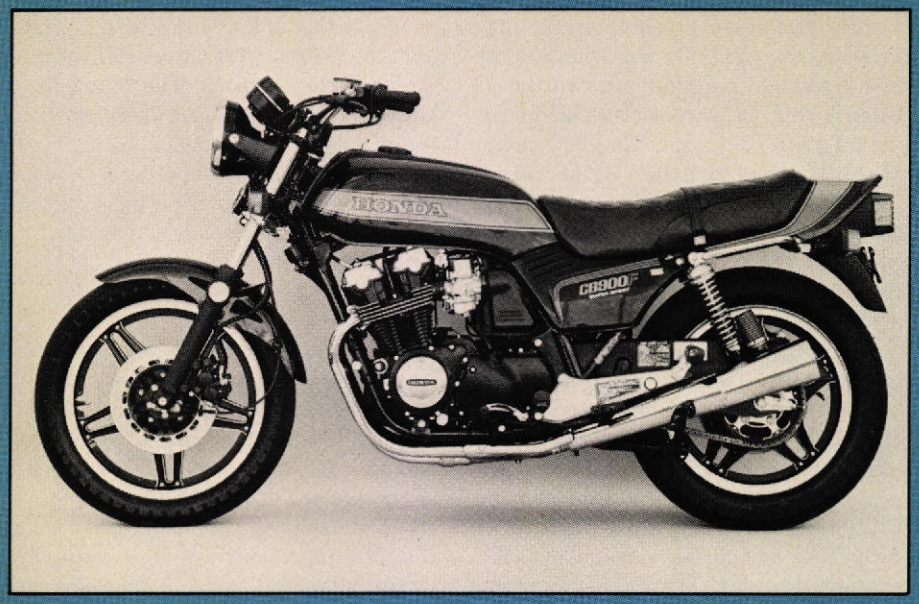
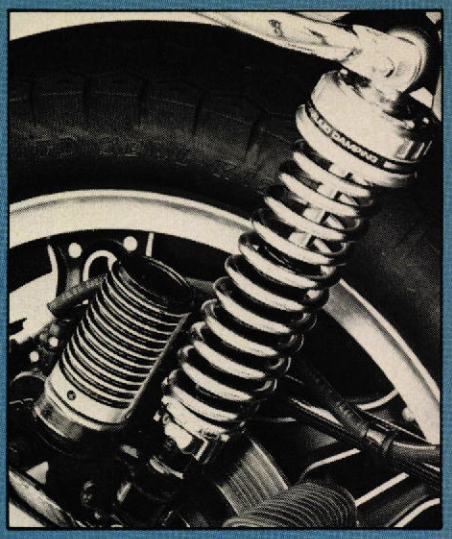
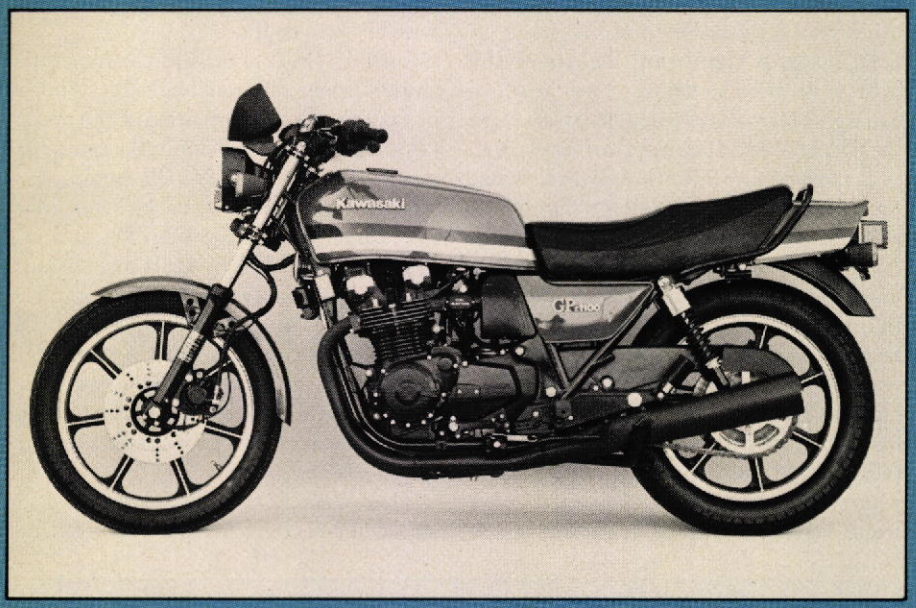




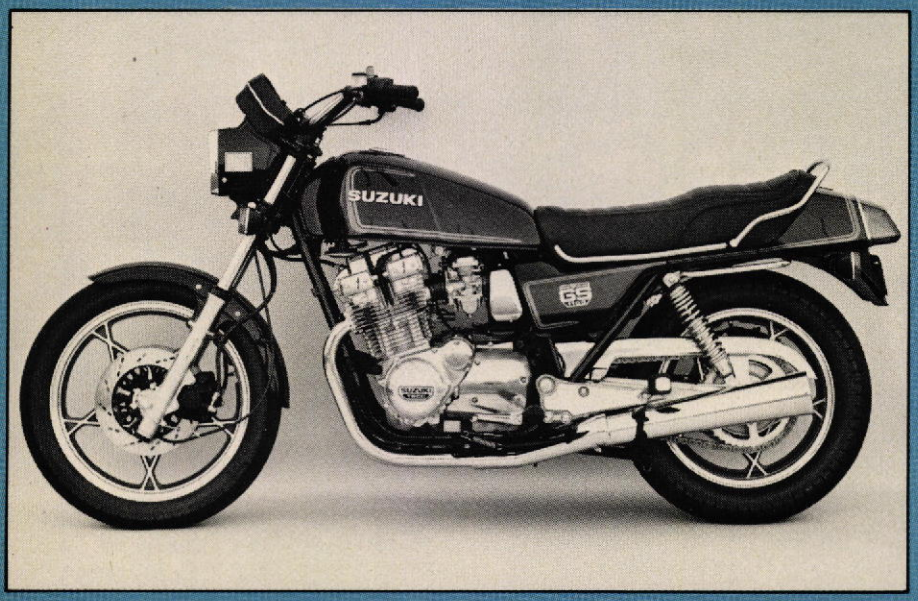
Showa rediscovers Thermo-Flow shocks

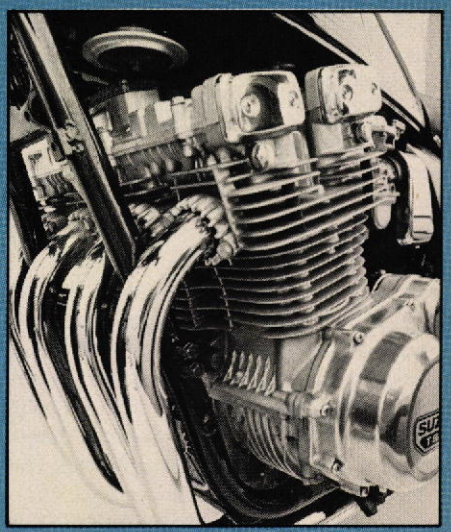
A set of VHDs for riding PDQ.



GPz's instrument pod is all electronic

Find the missing odometer.





Suzuki's TSCC mill boasts 79-plus HP

Fins, yes—fish story, no.

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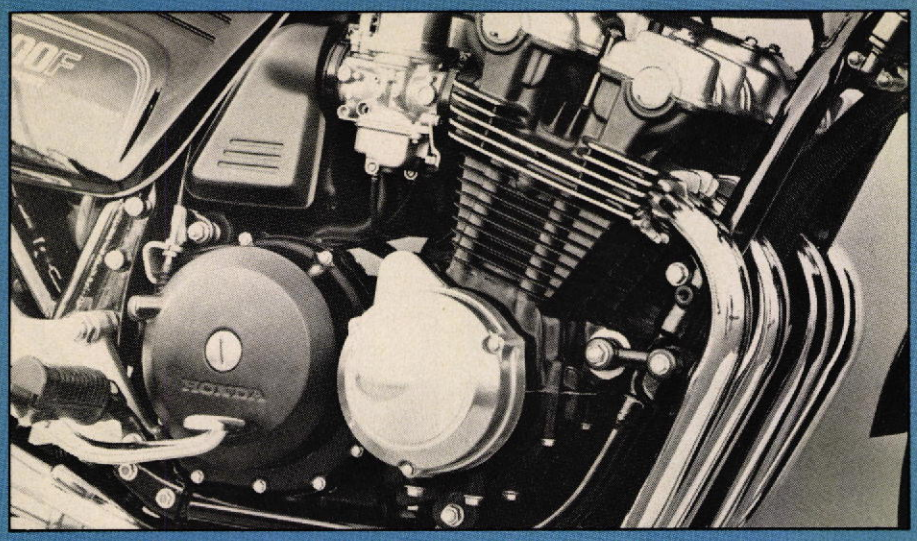
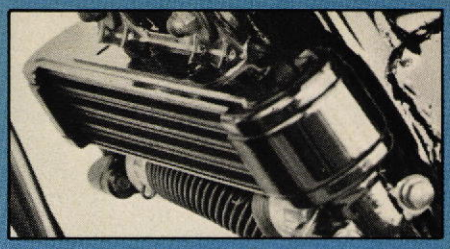


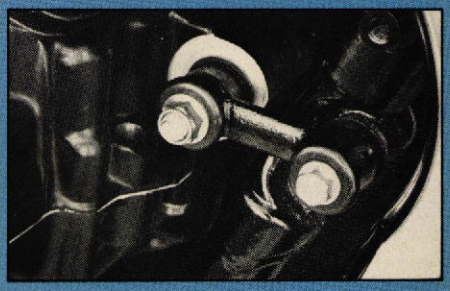
Engine from CB900 Custom trades its shaft for a chain to propel the Super Sport

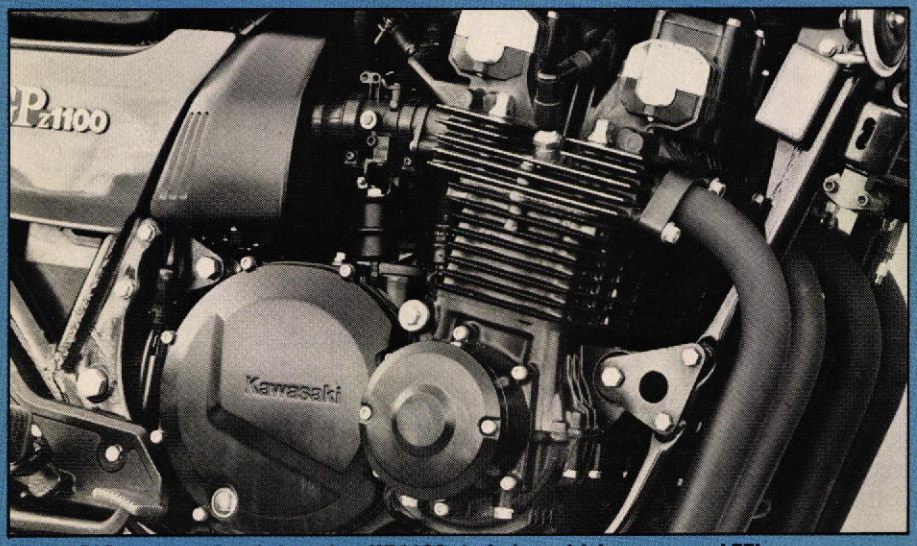
Japan's most familiar four gets into a sportier frame of mind.



CB900's oil cooler and rubber mounts

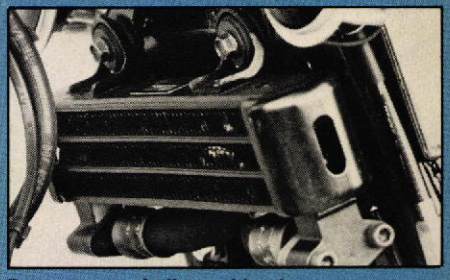
A cool and smooth character.





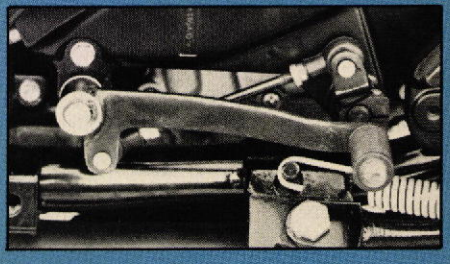
GPz's 1090cc powerplant is based on KZ1100 shaft, but with hot cams and EFI

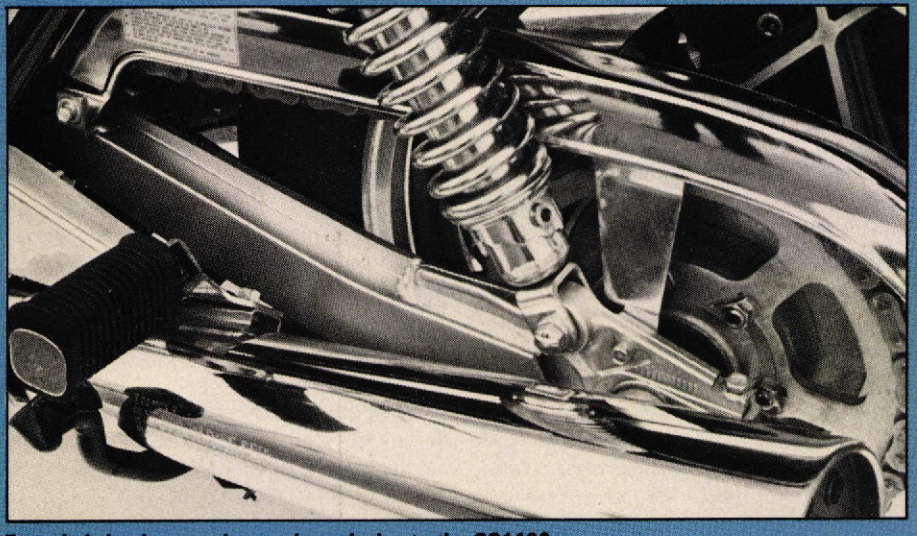
It sounds as mean as it looks, and runs as good as it sounds.



Racy rearsets boil your blood

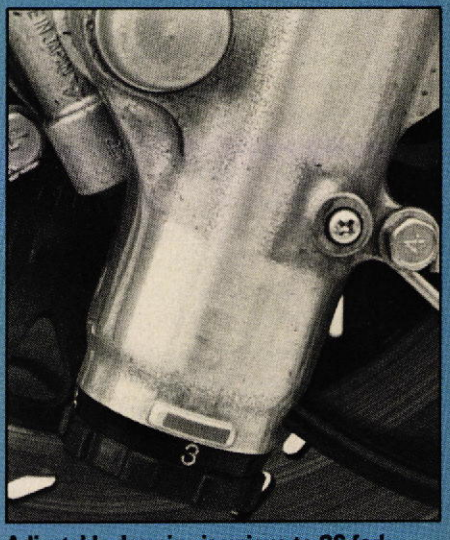
Tiny cooler reduces the fever.





Extruded aluminum swingarm is exclusive to the GS1100

Super-quiet exhaust system makes the Suzuki the soft-spoken hyperbike.



Adjustable damping is unique to GS fork

Still can't cope with racing loads.

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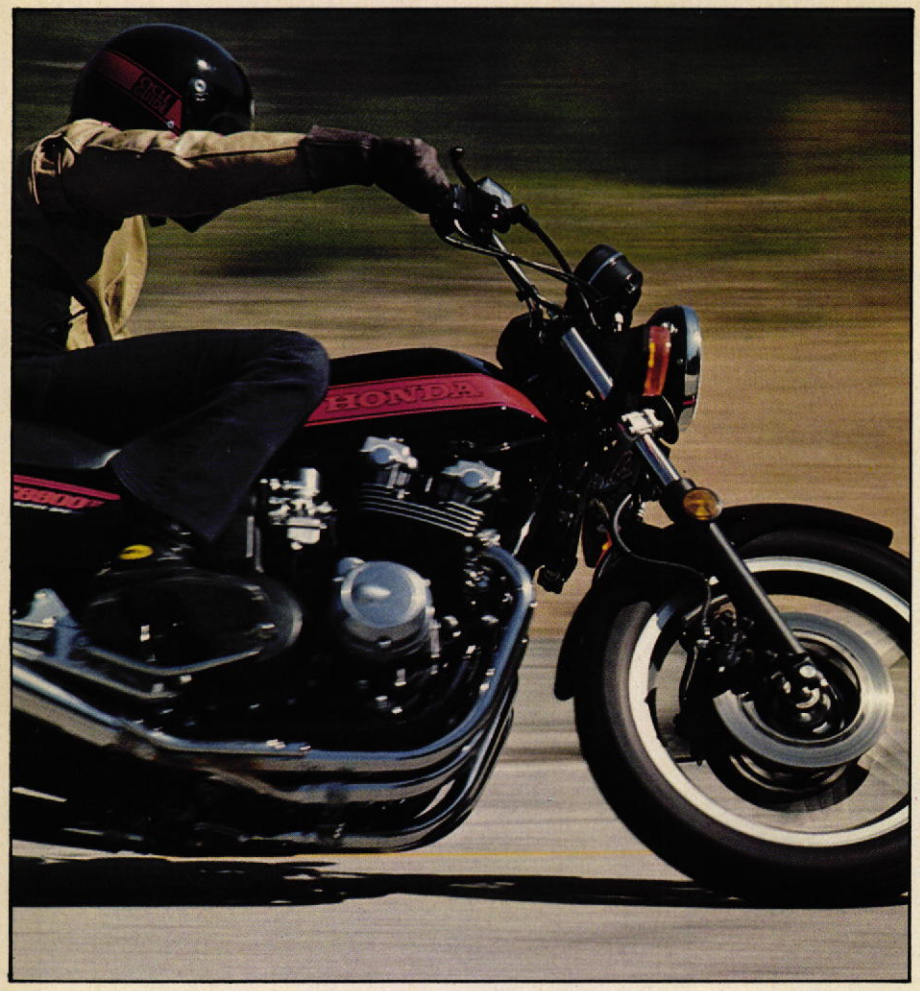

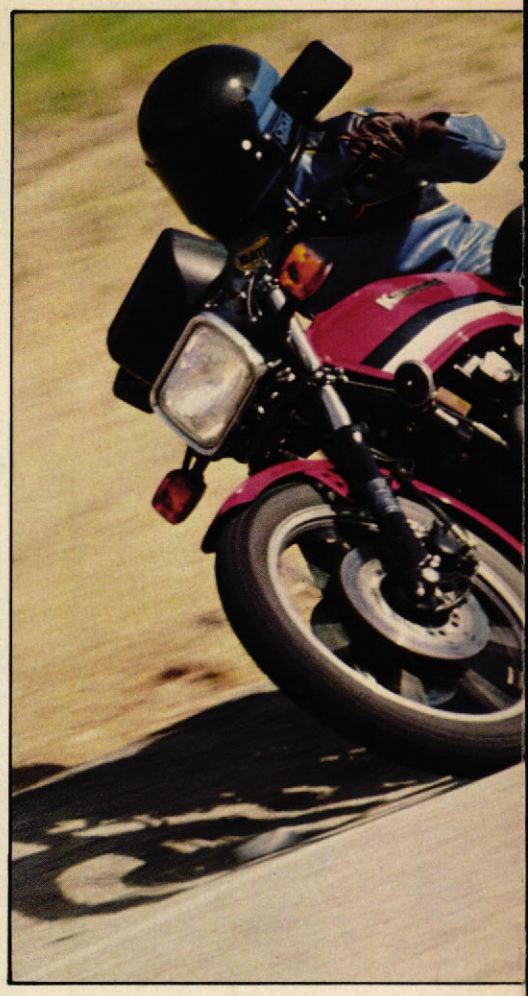

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they got, starting with some basic street riding to let the impressions begin forming at a reasonable pace—if anything about these bikes happens at a reasonable pace.

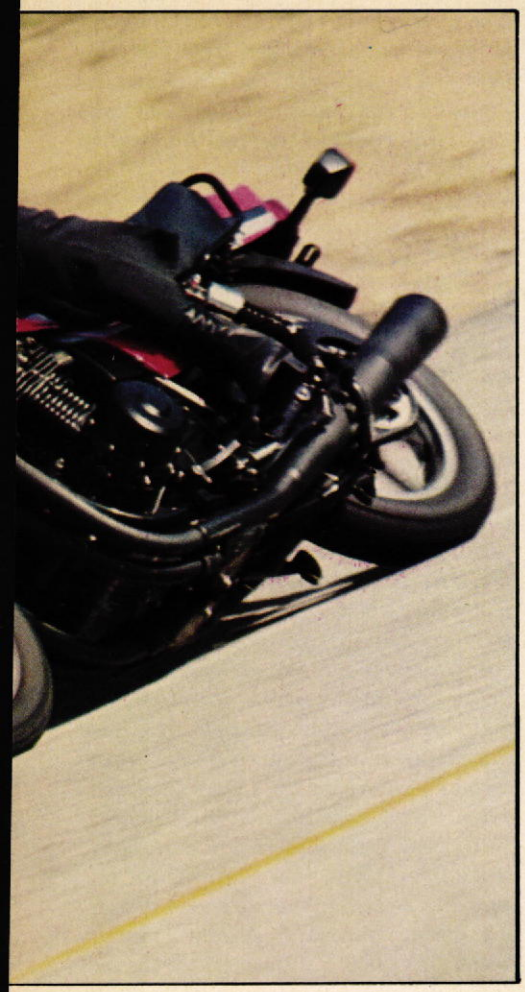
In congested stop-and-go, the Suzuki's low seat and wide bar make steering light and responsive, belying its 535-pound weight. Its engine flexibility allows you to ride all over town without constantly working the gearbox. The Suzuki's hair-trigger throttle, however, is particularly troublesome at low speeds. Its CVs, light throttle return spring and immediate throttle response can cause unintentional and abrupt speed changes even when you try to maintain a steady hand. The Honda's rubber-mounted engine is nearly as smooth as the Suzuki's, and its throttle is more controllable once the 900's lengthy warm-up is accomplished. At very low speeds the CB900F tends to fall into turns, and its transmission requires positive and firm shifts to insure engagement. The GPz seems less at home as a low-speed mount, partially because of its vibration, which at low revs gives off a steady throb through the handlebar. The GPz's fuel injection allows the Kawasaki engine to pull strongly whether it is hot or cold, but the system is flawed by a flat spot that shows up when the butterflies are abruptly snapped open from idle. Aside from this one glitch, however, the fuel injection produces linear throttle response at all speeds.

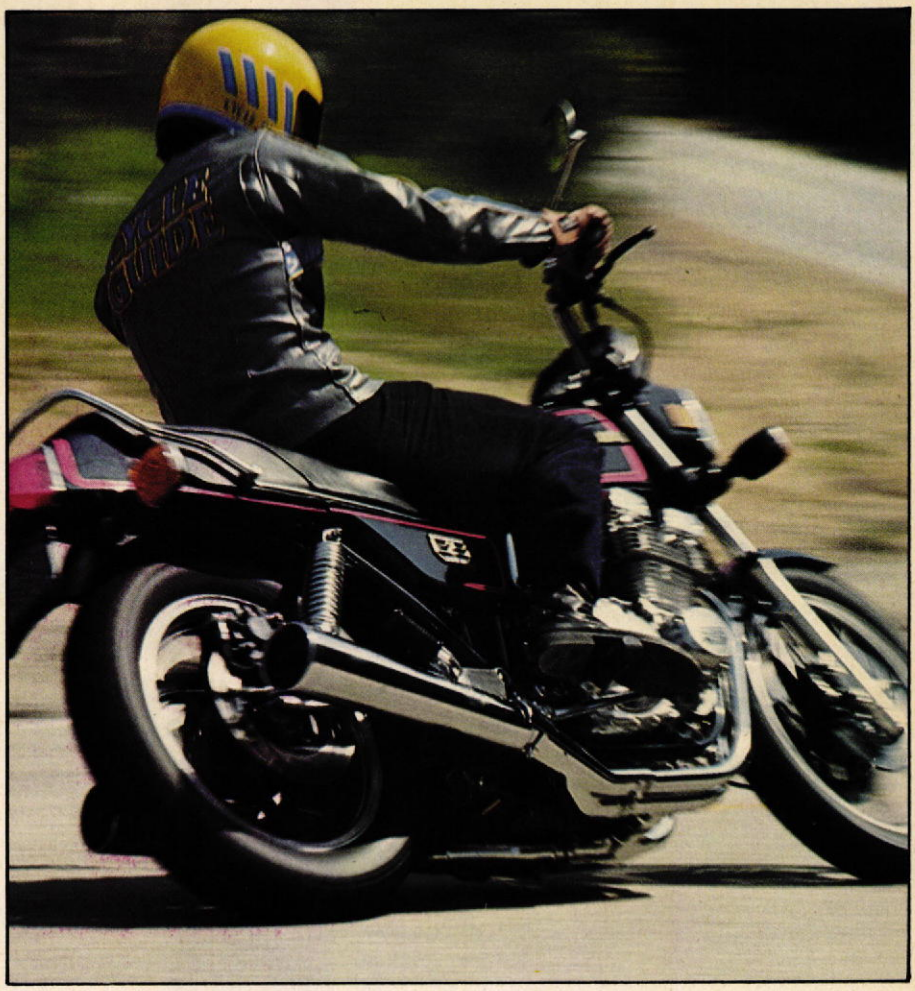
Riding around town is a great way to get acquainted with the hyperbikes, but it doesn't begin to use all their potential. So we took the big threesome out to the highway, where their five-foot wheelbases and willing engines really start working. But out on the Superslab, only one of these bikes approaches a complete payoff.

For endless miles at the double nickel, the GS's suspension can be dialed down for a touring ride smooth enough to convince you that long miles are what the bike is made for. The seat, too, is good for the long haul and is supremely comfortable for both the rider and passenger. The Suzuki's comfort quotient on the highway is matched by its roll-on ability in high-speed passing situations, where it pulls the GPz by a bike-and-a-half between 60 mph and 80 mph in fifth gear. While the Honda must be shifted to fourth to pass with alacrity, it can nearly match the Suzuki for suspension compliance on the freeway. Though the F's seat is filled with dual-density foam and provides a good rider platform for hours at a stretch, its passenger comfort is compromised by a high footrest location. The rider's pegs are also mounted fairly high, so both the rider and passenger are made aware of design concessions for cornering clearance.

Concessions also come to mind when the GPz does the Interstate drone. The Kawasaki seems to hang by its fork on the highway, while its relatively soft rear springs let the back of the bike dip and sag. Engine vibration drops at freeway speeds, but the seat is too firm for even medium-haul comfort, and forces the rider into one position with its dished shape and slippery vinyl. Although the lengthwise striations in the GPz's seat cover make for an interesting styling variation, they don't secure the rider or passenger as well as the transverse seams found on most motorcycle seats. Consequently, both rider and passenger sometimes slide under braking and acceleration, which further compromises the GPz's comfort.

Each of the bikes affords its rider a different interpretation of the ideal seating position, which produces three distinct highway rides. The Kawasaki's forward-lean position puts the rider in a fine balance between the pull of gravity and the rush of air, while the rearset pegs keep





things from feeling cramped. The moderately low handlebar on the Honda affords some of the same benefit, but the F's overall seating position is more upright, splitting the difference between the GPz and GS. On the Suzuki, the high, wide bar forces a totally upright seating position that strains the rider's forearms and hands as he competes with the wind blast. The bar also imparts a remote feel between rider and bike, which detracts from the Suzuki's sporting nature.

But any ergonomic flaws on the hyperbikes tend to blur into the background when the road gets twisty and the game turns to high-stakes play racing. There the bikes show off their sporting side—and offer the opportunity to evaluate them with the horizon bent far out of kilter. All the impressions carried into the twisties couldn't foretell the outcome of a session of apex-clipping. In spite of the GPz's radical and aggressive styling, its boisterous and torquey engine and its European riding posture, the Kawasaki inspires the least confidence in hard-cornering street mode. Its suspension produces wheelhop when the heavily preloaded fork chatters as weight transfers to the rear of the bike under hard acceleration. The Kawasaki occasionally feels tentative, as if out of the blue, its tires might break loose, in spite of being the same Bridgestone Mag Mopus items found on the GS1100. But offsetting this tentative feel, the GPz's riding position makes the rider a part of the machine, rather than merely a flexible lump perched on top. The Kawasaki's brakes are up to the task of slowing the bike from paralegal speeds, but under severe braking the point of lockup is difficult to predict.

Slamming the CB900F through turns reveals what it does best. Its suspension reacts so well to bumps and ripples that the bike rarely bobbles off line through a bend. The strong chassis and rigid fork assembly give the 900F its solid feel, yet through fast sweepers the Honda, too, loses some of its sure-footedness. The 900's twin-piston brakes, new for 1981 and a clear notch better than any other OEM brakes, offer strong, predictable stopping. Not quite as brilliant as the 900's brakes is its transmission, however, which requires concentration and a firm toe; missed shifts are a more-than-occasional happening.

An upright seating position, quiet engine and smooth highway ride disguise the Suzuki's canyon-road prowess. The GS doesn't look or sound like a street-racer, but its supple suspension and broad powerband conspire to let you stuff the Suzuki through turns more quickly than the other two machines at high street speeds. Pavement ripples leave the Suzuki moving around on its suspension, rather than all over the road, through a turn. There is a penalty to be paid in ground clearance as the compliant suspension allows the low-slung undercarriage to scuff the pavement, but the trade is offset by an ability to maintain tire contact.

So the bikes leave the twisties in a tight pack, the GS leading with the F and GPz close behind. But what happens when you let it all hang out—or off—like on a racetrack? To find out, we took the threesome to the roadrace track to pick apart the tight formation in a day of working the bikes to their far limits. After shredding tires and scraping footpegs, the smooth pavement of Willow Springs Raceway exposed each bike's hidden nature.

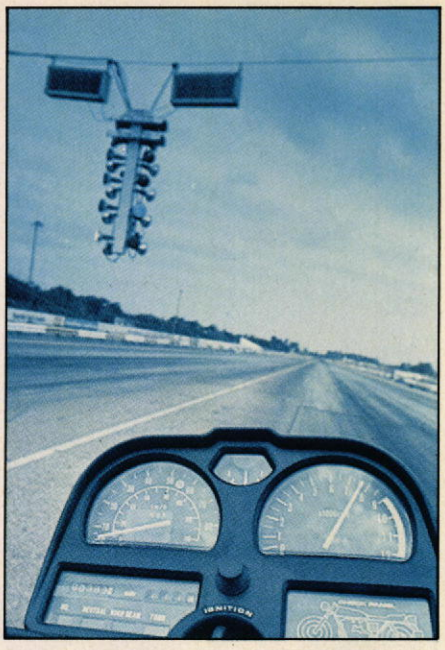
High-speed cornering, the kind of sheer velocity impossible to generate on public roads, overwhelms the cushy Suzuki. Even with its suspension dialed to the firmest settings, the GS wanders and feels vague when pushed through fast turns. The condition sets a limit that has the rider

Continued

working extra hard to sustain racing speeds.

The Honda works better at the limit than the Suzuki, but it, too, feels overworked at maximum cornering speeds. The Honda's disadvantage in straightaway speed due to its smaller displacement is *nearly* made up by its willingness to brake hard. Its brakes allow the rider to stuff the 900F deeper into a turn than either the GS or GPz, and do it with the confidence that he can easily scrub excess speed. The only problem with this technique is the occasional missed shift, which throws everything off line. Once again, the Honda's transmission is to blame for shading an otherwise excellent performance.

On the racetrack the GPz finally delivers the performance that its styling so loudly touts. Its suspension, which seemed too firm on the street, becomes the perfect set-up for the tremendous chassis loads created at high speeds. The seating position is pure magic on the track, allowing rider and bike to work as one. The engine is strong and flexible, and it's easy to inadvertantly overrev the GPz because of the engine's willingness to pull strongly well over the 8500-rpm redline. Only tire traction sets a limit to the GPz's cornering speeds, and breakaway occurs with ample warning. The front brake works well in hauling the bike down, but the rear brake has a tendency to lock when used hard,



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occasionally producing wheelhop and some heartstopping corner entrances. But on a roadrace course at least, the GPz's true sporting potential finally fulfills the promise of its racy styling.

From the roadrace track the hyperbikes went to the dragstrip, not to press the limits of their overall performance but to put their engines to the absolute test under the unflinching stare of the Chrondek timer. The quarter-mile represents the final few inches of the hyperbikes' total performance, but in a class of the "bests" and the "mosts," even those last inches assume vast proportions. A day at the strip in weather too hot for ideal runs marked the fastest pass for the Suzuki at 11.36 sec/118.57 mph. It was followed by the Kawasaki with a 11.44 sec/118.57 mph quarter, while the Honda, because of its 200cc displacement disadvantage, posted a slower run of 12.21 sec/111.11 mph. We know that the hyperbikes are capable of faster runs under ideal conditions, but the figures are still telling. The importance of the quarter-mile lies in the relative, not absolute, speeds of the bikes when they're tested under identical conditions.

Still, a pass through the lights at the dragstrip is only one small measure of a motorcycle's performance. Unless the bike is designed for the quarter-mile alone, that one measure is only a small weight applied to the performance scales. And the hyperbikes are not one-dimensional performers. Each represents a balance of performance, and only comparing the sum of their individual capabilities can produce a winner.

In weighing the total performance of the three hyperbikes, there can be but one winner. The Suzuki's rare blend of shattering performance and elegant manners keeps it at the top of the class for the sec-

ond year running. The GS1100 is at home idling through traffic or blasting down a country road, all the while surrounding its rider in the luxury of its supple suspension and its plush seating. Despite the Suzuki's deficiencies when pushed to the limits as a roadracer, its principal shortcoming for real-world purposes is its understated styling. The GS's conservative look gives no hint to its mechanical abilities, and its upright riding position further detracts from a sport-bike appeal. But the GS1100 still has the muscle and brains to keep it on top of the hyperbike class.

Even though the Suzuki was the unanimous choice for the overall best hyperbike because of its far-ranging capabilities, both the Honda and Kawasaki will have their followings. And rightly so. Each offers its own appealing blend of features and functions, though in a narrower band than the Suzuki. And so, choosing for the number-two spot is even harder than picking No. 1. Both the CB900F and GPz are purposeful sport machines, and both look ready for clipping apexes and winning races. But because of an advantage in ride, brakes and price, the CB900F squeaks by the GPz at the finish. The Honda's instrumentation is the best of the threesome. Its traditional round dials are easy to read, and are more compact than the snazzy GS and GPz pods. The 900F tackles the road with an ability that rivals the Suzuki, and leaves enough money in its rider's pocket for accessories and modifications.

Last, yet far from least, comes the GPz. This bike is so appealing that its shortcomings seem magnified. Its visual statement is tantalizing, and its manners bespeak of racer-like abilities. Indeed, on the racetrack this promise is fulfilled, but on the street the Kawasaki demands compromises in comfort, civility and mileage. If all the world were a racetrack, then GPz1100s would be the undisputed world's greatest motorcycles. It isn't and they aren't; but the key word is "undisputed."

Whether your particular wants in a hyperbike tend toward the racetrack, touring or street, you can't go far wrong in picking any of these bikes. If the Suzuki's distinct blend of performance doesn't strike a responsive note in you, the Honda's probably will. Or if looking at the GPz makes your heart pound, then look no further. Despite differences in features, styling and absolute performance, any of these three hyperbikes can transport you to the far edge of high-performance personal transportation. In the end, it's a winning proposition. How often do you get to choose from three answers to a question—all of which are right? •

Ride Review

• I can't do much bragging about my choice in the hyperbike sweepstakes, the CB900F. It's not the quickest or the fastest. It doesn't have fuel injection or a safety check panel. And when you crank on the throttle, you don't feel a twinge of fear. No, there's nothing about the F-type that inspires much in the way of swaggering. It's just the best set of hyperbike wheels you can buy, that's all.

Just like the late Suzuki GS1000E, another bike with a low brag-quotient, the Honda makes you sit up and take notice of the special finesse it brings to every corner. It pounds the Interstates more comfortably than the GPz and offers more stability than the GS1100E in high-speed corners. In short, the Honda balances good handling, usable power and a comfortable ride better than its rivals.

This particular combination of goodness might not lead to a lot of bragging about what this bike is—but it contributes to a lot of pride in what it *does*. And what it does is link corners together as gracefully at 125 mph as it does at 25 mph. The Honda might not be as quick as the Suzuki nor as stable as the Kawasaki, but from the beginning to the end of racer road, I'm convinced that CB900F is the quickest and best hyperbike ride money can buy. Balance is the secret.

—Michael Jordan

• It's all starting to sound like a broken record. Yet one more time the staff of CYCLE GUIDE emerges from a hyperbike confrontation singing high praise for Suzuki's magnificent GS1100. But what's a staffer to do? Hell, we've *tried* to blow the GS out of the water by comparing it to every high-performance device known to man, but in the end the Suzuki always rolls home an easy winner.

I know that the GPz1100's lusty looks and primeval growl could bring a dead man's blood to a boil, and that the CB900F's high grin-per-buck quotient is hard to ignore. But those are critical factors mostly at the time of purchase. And once the new wears off, once you have to live with the bike on a day-in day-out basis—meaning all sorts of rides of all sorts of lengths on all sorts of roads—it's the all-around performance, not the price or the looks, that seems important. And in that respect, the Suzuki is in another league altogether.

Still, someone ought to play devil's advocate here. Someone ought to have the courage to proclaim to the world that the Suzuki couldn't possibly be *that* good. But it isn't going to be me. Because the GS1100 is my all-time favorite hyper . . . all-time favorite hyper . . . *—Paul Dean*

• To hell with dragstrip times, dyno curves or any other figures, there is no way you can quantify the GPz1100's brilliance. Indeed, it wouldn't really matter to me if the Kawasaki were the slowest bike in the group, it would still be my ultimate hyperbike. I even get excited just looking at the bike; its aggressive red lines with matte-black accents are enough to make my blood boil. I'm not alone, either. Even on the freeway people drove up alongside and just stared. A Highway Patrolman even waved at me—and they don't normally do that unless they have just given me a ticket.

I was passed by the same officer while riding the GS1100 and he never even looked over. He probably wouldn't have seen the CB900 Honda, either. Neither bike is nearly as hyper-looking as the Kawasaki, and in a country where 55 mph is the limit you need more than just the capability of blistering speed to get excited. You need a motorcycle that makes your heart jump whenever you see it, one that looks fast just sitting in the garage and one that everyone on the street knows is a hyperbike. That is why numbers alone can't begin to explain how good the GPz1100 Kawasaki really is, unless you are counting my heartbeat. Only that can measure the success of this hyperbike.

—David Dewhurst

• There's usually little room for diplomacy in my moto-preferences, but my reaction to the hyperbikes wouldn't prove it. To hear me tell it, you'd probably think that I'd already been to the fitting for my pinstripe suit and diplomatic sash. Try as I might, I don't see just one winner here.

If, for example, I wanted to ride the bike most likely to win any street confrontation, I'd pick the GS1100 every time. If it's not functional perfection, only creative nit-picking will turn up any glitches.

Or, on the other hand, if ultra-high-speed thrills and the looks to match were the goal, the GPz would win, hands down. It's as good at what it does at the outer limits of performance as the Suzuki is the rest of the time.

On yet a third hand, since dragstrip supremacy, roll-on kingship or possession of the fastest roadrace lap don't by themselves declare a winner, the Honda makes perfect sense. For a sizable chunk of cash less than the competition, it delivers parity in real-world-usable performance.

In a confrontation of motorcycles as good as this current crop of hyperbikes, straight prejudice is the final criterion. The individual and collective brilliance of these bikes simply proves too dazzling.

—Larry Works

Continued

Honda CB900F

IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company, Inc.
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

CATEGORY: street

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $3498

ENGINE

Type ..... four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement ..... double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke ..... 64.5mm x 69.0mm
Displacement 901.8cc
Compression ratio 8.8:1
Carburetion ..... four 32mm Keihin constant-vacuum, with one accelerator pump
Air filter ..... disposable paper element
Lubrication ..... wet sump
Starting system ..... electric only
Ignition ..... transistorized breakerless
Charging system ..... 12-volt; alternator, voltage regulator, rectifier

DRIVETRAIN

Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Crankshaft-to-jackshaft ..... Hy-vo type chain 1.000:1 ratio
Jackshaft-to-transmission ..... 2.041:1 ratio
Final drive ..... #630 chain (3/4-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.588:1 (17/44) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.533	13.380	5.8
II	1.789	9.450	8.3
III	1.391	7.347	10.6
IV	1.160	6.127	12.8
V	1.000	5.282	14.8

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 39mm stanchion tube diameter / 6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear ..... 5-way adjustable spring preload, 3-way adjustable compression damping, 3-way adjustable rebound damping / 4.3 in. (109mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.8-in. (275mm) discs
Rear ..... single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.6-in. (295mm) disc

TIRES

Front ..... 3.50V19 Dunlop Gold Seal F11 tubeless
Rear ..... 4.25V18 Dunlop Gold Seal K127 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

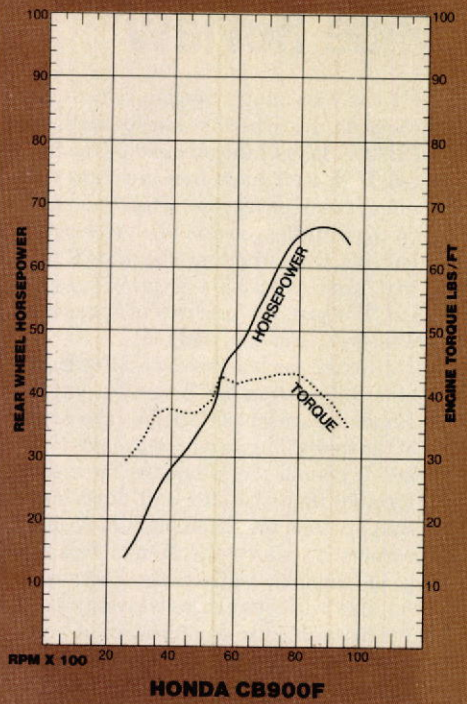
Weight ..... 547 lbs. (248kg)
Weight distribution ..... 46.6% front, 53.4% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 995 lbs. (451kg)
Wheelbase ..... 59.3 to 60.3 in. (1506 to 1532mm)
Seat height ..... 33.0 in. (838mm)
Handlebar width ..... 29.5 in. (749mm)
Footpeg height ..... 14.3 in. (363mm)
Ground clearance ..... 6.0 in. (152mm), at exhaust pipe
Steering head angle ..... 27.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.3 in. (110mm)
Frame ..... tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity ..... 4.7 qt. (4.5/)
Fuel tank ..... steel, 5.3 gal. (20.0/), including 0.5 gal. (2.0/) reserve
Instrumentation ..... speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption ..... 41 to 47 mpg (17 to 20 km/l)
Range, maximum ..... 217 to 249 miles (349 to 401km)
Range, reserve only ..... 21 to 24 miles (34 to 39km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 28 mph actual
Speedometer error, 60 mph indicated ..... 59 mph actual
Best ¼-mile acceleration 12.207 sec., 111.11 mph (179 kph)
Top speed (calculated) ..... 141 mph (226 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 30 ft. (9m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 130 ft. (40m)

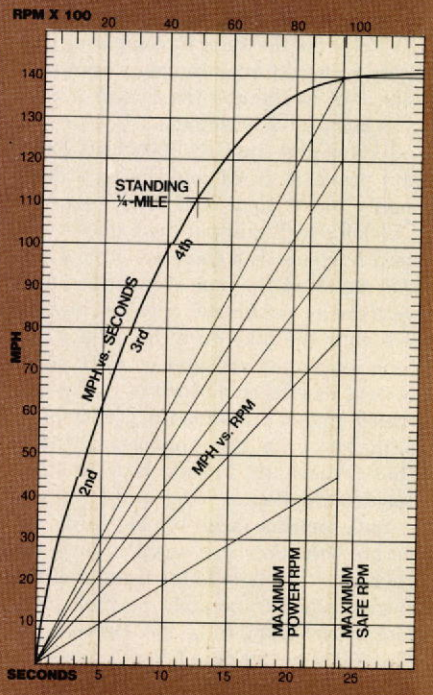
WARRANTY: 6 months/6000 miles

AVAILABLE COLORS: metallic silver, black



HONDA CB900F

RPM	HP	Torque
2500	14.1	29.6
3000	18.9	33.1
3500	24.6	36.9
4000	28.6	37.6
4500	31.5	36.8
5000	35.9	37.7
5500	44.6	42.6
6000	47.6	41.7
6500	52.3	42.3
7000	56.9	42.7
7500	62.3	43.6
8000	65.9	43.3
8500	66.8	41.3
9000	66.6	38.9
9500	63.9	35.3



Kawasaki GPz1100

IMPORTER: Kawasaki Motors Corporation
2009 East Edinger Avenue
Santa Ana, California 92711

CATEGORY: street

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $4399

ENGINE

Type ..... four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement ..... double overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke ..... 72.5mm x 66.0mm
Displacement 1089.8cc
Compression ratio 8.9:1
Carburetion ..... Mikuni electronic fuel injection, four 34mm throttle bores
Air filter ..... washable oiled foam element
Lubrication ..... wet sump
Starting system ..... electric only
Ignition ..... transistorized breakerless
Charging system ..... 12-volt; alternator, voltage regulator, rectifier

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 1.732:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #630 chain (3/4-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.733:1 (41/15) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.643	12.511	6.2
II	1.833	8.677	8.9
III	1.429	6.764	11.4
IV	1.174	5.557	13.9
V	1.040	4.923	15.7

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter / 5.3 in. (135mm)
Rear ..... 7-way adjustable spring preload, 5-way adjustable rebound damping / 4.3 in. (109mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.6-in. (270mm) discs
Rear ..... single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.6-in. (270mm) disc

TIRES

Front ..... 3.25V19 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless
Rear ..... 4.25V18 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G506 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

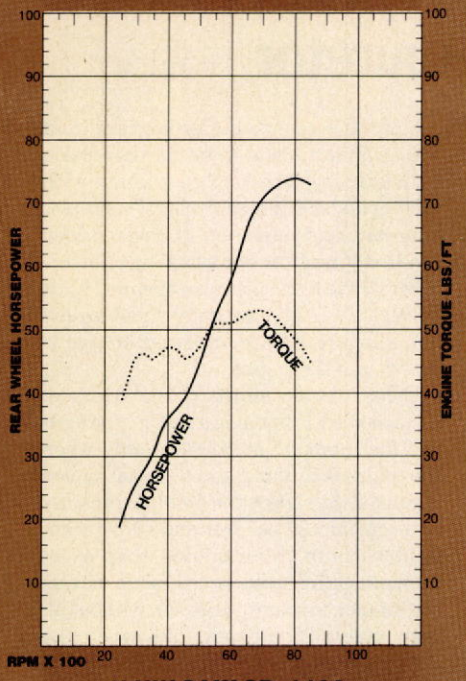
Weight ..... 538 lbs. (244kg)
Weight distribution ..... 46.9% front, 53.1% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 935 lbs. (424kg)
Wheelbase ..... 60.0 to 60.5 in. (1524 to 1537mm)
Seat height ..... 32.0 in. (813mm)
Handlebar width ..... 28.8 in. (732mm)
Footpeg height ..... 14.0 in. (356mm)
Ground clearance ..... 5.2 in. (132mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle ..... 29.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.7 in. (120mm)
Frame ..... tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity ..... 4.1 qt. (3.9/)
Fuel tank ..... steel, 5.7 gal. (21.5/), no reserve
Instrumentation ..... speedometer, tachometer, voltmeter, fuel guage, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption ..... 38 to 47 mpg (16 to 20 km/l)
Range, maximum ..... 217 to 268 miles (349 to 431km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 60 mph indicated ..... 60 mph actual
Best ¼-mile acceleration 11.436 sec., 118.57 mph (191 kph)
Top speed (calculated) ..... 133 mph (215 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 39 ft. (12m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 158 ft. (48m)

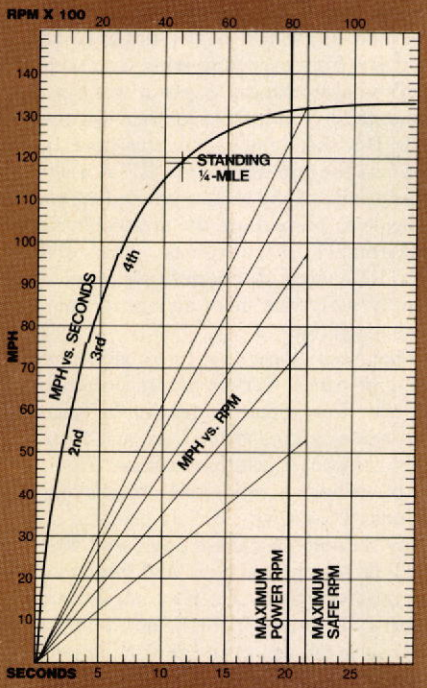
WARRANTY: 6 months

AVAILABLE COLORS: Firecracker Red



KAWASAKI GPz1100

RPM	HP	Torque
2500	18.5	38.9
3000	26.4	46.2
3500	30.4	45.6
4000	36.1	47.4
4500	38.8	45.3
5000	45.0	47.3
5500	53.2	50.8
6000	58.1	50.9
6500	65.6	53.0
7000	70.6	53.0
7500	73.3	51.3
8000	73.9	48.5
8500	72.4	44.7



Suzuki GS1100EX

IMPORTER: U.S. Suzuki Motor Corporation
3251 East Imperial Highway
Brea, California 92621

CATEGORY: street

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $3999

ENGINE

Type ..... four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement ..... double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke ..... 72.0mm x 66.0mm
Displacement 1074.9cc
Compression ratio 9.5:1
Carburetion ..... four 34mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Air filter ..... disposable paper element
Lubrication ..... wet sump
Starting system ..... electric only
Ignition ..... transistorized breakerless
Charging system ..... 12-volt; alternator, voltage regulator, rectifier

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... helical gears; 1.776:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #630 chain (3/4-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.800:1 (15/42) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.500	12.429	6.1
II	1.778	8.838	8.5
III	1.381	6.865	11.0
IV	1.125	5.593	13.5
V	0.962	4.780	15.7

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter 4-way adjustable spring preload, 4-way adjustable rebound damping/6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear ..... 5-way adjustable spring preload, 4-way adjustable rebound damping/4.5 in. (114mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.8-in. (275mm) discs
Rear ..... double-action hydraulic caliper, 10.8-in. (275mm) disc

TIRES

Front ..... 3.50V19 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303
Rear ..... 4.50V17 Bridgestone Mag Mopus G506

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

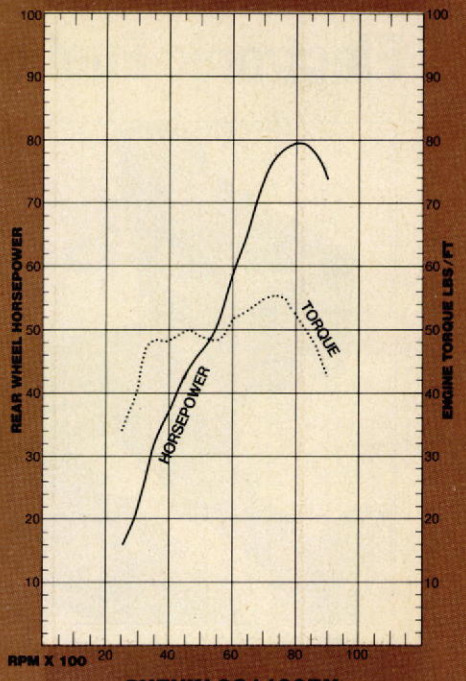
Weight ..... 535 lbs. (243kg)
Weight distribution ..... 46.2% front, 53.8% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 1030 lbs. (467kg)
Wheelbase ..... 60.0 to 61.2 in. (1524 to 1554mm)
Seat height ..... 32.3 in. (820mm)
Handlebar width ..... 31.0 in. (787mm)
Footpeg height ..... 13.0 in. (330mm)
Ground clearance ..... 6.0 in. (152mm), at exhaust pipe
Steering head angle ..... 28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.1 in. (103mm)
Frame ..... tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity ..... 3.6 qt. (3.7l)
Fuel tank ..... steel, 4.8 gal. (18.0l), including 1.5 gal. (5.5l) reserve
Instrumentation ..... speedometer, tachometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, fuel guage

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption ..... 43 to 48 mpg (18 to 20 km/l)
Range, maximum ..... 206 to 230 miles (331 to 371km)
Range, reserve only ..... 65 to 72 miles (105 to 116km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 29 mph actual
Speedometer error, 60 mph indicated ..... 58 mph actual
Best ¼-mile acceleration 11.362 sec., 118.57 mph (191 kph)
Top speed (calculated) ..... 141 mph (227 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 36 ft. (11m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 123 ft. (37m)

WARRANTY: 12 months/unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: black or blue



SUZUKI GS1100EX

RPM	HP	Torque
2500	16.2	34.1
3000	23.2	40.6
3500	32.3	48.5
4000	36.9	48.4
4500	42.8	50.0
5000	46.7	49.1
5500	50.5	48.2
6000	59.4	52.0
6500	66.1	53.4
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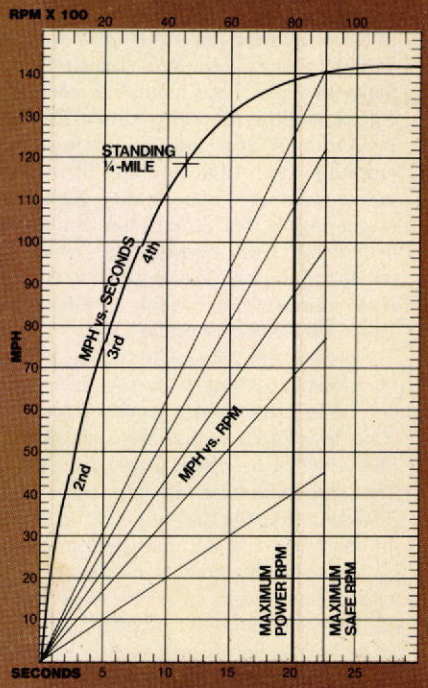
8500	78.5	48.5
9000	74.0	43.2



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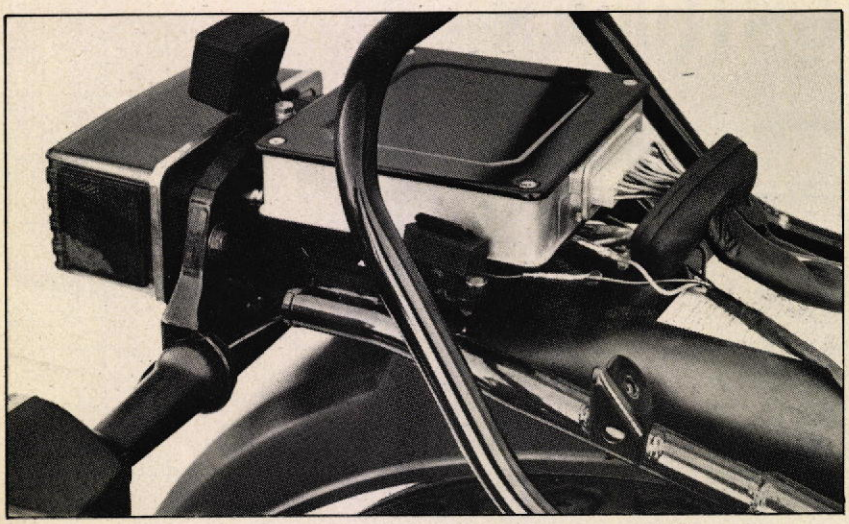
Electronic Fuel Injection: The Un-Carburetor



Black Box for GPz's injection monitors air and engine temperature, air flow, etc.

All the wisdom of carburetors, and more, lurking in the tail section.

• It's not surprising that Kawasaki, motorcycling's guardian angel of OEM high performance, was the first to use fuel injection on a production bike. What *is* hard to fathom, though, is why Kawasaki's EFI (Electronic Fuel Injection) was introduced last year exclusively on a street-cruising model, the KZ1000 LTD Classic, rather than on something more performance-oriented. This year the system still is reserved for just one Kawasaki, but more appropriately, it now squirts its electronically metered fuel charges into the ultra-high-performance engine in the GPz1100.

Frankly, the *real* surprise is that it has taken so long for fuel injection to find its way onto *any* motorcycle. Injected cars, after all, have been available since the Fifties, and this particular kind of EFI has been around since the late Sixties. Considering, then, that so many of today's motorcycles are sophisticated, high-tech street racers, it's remarkable that they still drink from carburetors—some of which are so stone-axe simple that they're little more than a variable-rate leak between fuel tank and intake tract.

Carburetors, especially those of the slide/needle variety, also have a built-in limitation that fuel injection does not: The device that meters the fuel most of the time (the needle) is firmly attached to that which meters the air (the slide). Meaning that the fuel-to-air ratio cannot be instantly and automatically adjusted as the operating conditions change. The carb has no means by which to ascertain that a richer or leaner mixture is needed at any particular throttle setting, nor does it have provisions for automatic adjustment even if it did know. In that respect, the constant-vacuum carb is a distinct improvement, but even it often falls victim to the same shortcoming.

With EFI, however, the fuel-metering system can be adjusted independent of the airflow. A butterfly valve in each cylinder's 34mm throttle body determines, according to the position of the twistgrip, how much air is inducted, while the fuel is injected into the airflow through a nozzle in each inlet port between the butterfly and the intake valve. And a solid-state "black box" called the Electronic Control Unit (ECU) determines, with the aid of information it receives from various strategically placed sensors, precisely how much fuel is required for any situation. The ECU is notified of the rate of air intake by a flowmeter mounted downstream from the air filter; of air density by an air temperature sensor mounted next to the flowmeter; of engine rpm by a signal from the ignition coils; of the need for cold-start enrichment (there's no choke) by a temperature sensor in the cylinder head; of the need for max-power enrichment by a set of contacts at the wide-open setting of the throttles; and of the need for normal idle-speed enrichment by contacts on the throttle stops.

Given all that information, the pre-programmed ECU can instantly compute the ideal amount of fuel needed for any situation at any time. The amount of fuel that's discharged into the intake tract is regulated by how long the electrically triggered injector nozzles are told to stay open by the ECU. All four of them, incidentally, are actuated simultaneously once every engine revolution (using the electrical impulses sent to the ignition coil that fires cylinders 1 and 4) rather than being individually phased to coordinate with each cylinder's intake cycle. It's simpler that way, and engineers discovered long ago that it matters not when injection occurs relative to intake valve opening. Each nozzle, therefore, actually must squirt *twice* before its accumulated charge is drawn into the engine.

Other new-to-motorcycling tricks in Kawasaki's EFI include a roller-type electric fuel pump that operates only when the engine is running, and a special bypass regulator that keeps the fuel-line pressure at a constant 36 psi over and above manifold vacuum. Maintaining that exact pressure differential is crucial to having the proper mixture ratio, for without it, high manifold vacuum (like when the throttle is snapped shut) would tend to suck more fuel than needed from the nozzles; low vacuum (as when the throttle is snapped open) would result in too *little* fuel being injected.

If all of this sounds like a very complicated, hands-off system, that's because compared to a bank of carburetors, it is. Granted, there are a few functions that can be dealt with by a rider/mechanic (idle speed and throttle-valve balance, to name two), and there's even a fast-idle lever that can be flipped up to prevent stalling when the engine is stone-cold. But otherwise, maintenance and adjustment to this system is pretty much limited to component replacement.

That might make EFI sound to you like yet another unnecessary complication, one more diabolical device designed to keep you from ever tampering with your bike's vital workings. Maybe it was even mandated—or at least *suggested*—by the Feds. But that's not so, not this time. In fact, just the opposite is true. EFI is a significant ally in the motorcycle industry's struggle to perpetuate the stratospheric performance of engines like the GPz1100's while still permitting them to comply with ever more stringent emissions regulations.

That's something that fuel injection of this type can do better than carburetors. EFI can draw a much finer line between just lean enough and *too* lean, and then, within reason, adjust that leanness to suit the prevailing operating and climatic conditions. That's why EFI is used on so many automobiles these days, and why you'll be seeing it on more and more motorcycles very soon. Yes, it's complicated, but it's also more fuel-efficient, and no one has to tell you of the growing importance of that, do they? —*Paul Dean*

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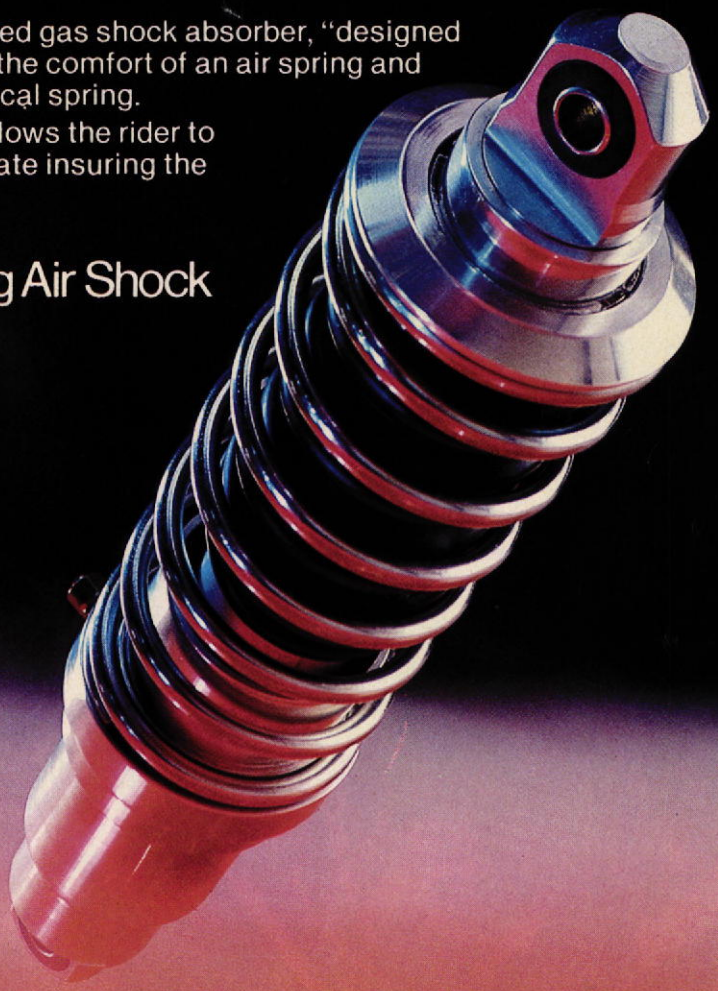

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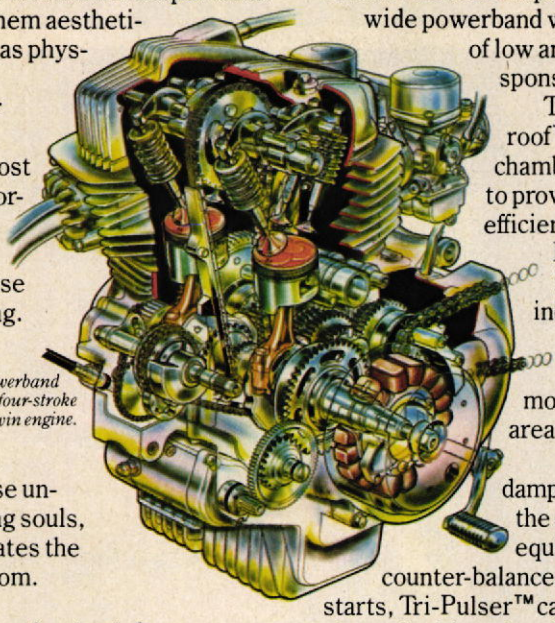
People who want transportation that moves them aesthetically, as well as physically. That reflects their personality.

And most of all, transportation that is not just unique because of its price tag.

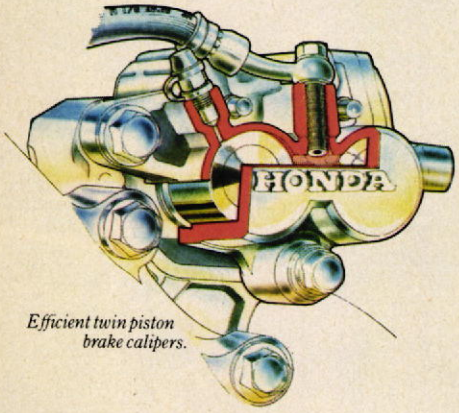


Honda's wide powerband 395 cc four-stroke twin engine.

To these uncompromising souls, Honda dedicates the CM400 Custom.

The price is right.

The CM400 Custom has the look and feel of a larger Custom. Along with the economical performance features you'd expect from a mid-sized motorcycle.



Efficient twin piston brake calipers.

Like a low initial price, good mileage and lots of easy-to-maintain features.

The CM400 Custom is powered by a 395 cc four-stroke twin engine that gets you around town in a hurry. It's fed by two 30 mm constant velocity carbs with an accelerator pump for crisp, smooth throttle response. And it has a wide powerband with lots of low and mid-range response.

Three valve Pent-roof™ combustion chambers are designed to provide more efficient combustion. By using two intake valves, individual valve weight is reduced. And more overall port area is achieved.

To help damp vibration, the engine is equipped with dual counter-balancers. And for easier starts, Tri-Pulser™ capacitor discharge ignition. A maintenance-free system which is unaffected by dirt or moisture.

The suspension of the CM400 Custom also resembles many of Honda's larger Customs. VHD™ rear shock absorbers with 5 spring preload adjustments to suit different rider and load conditions. And air assisted front forks with dual low friction Syntallic™ bushings and an air pressure equalizer.

The CM400 Custom is loaded with features that are going to make you look good.

A sound investment.

If you're looking for a motorcycle that sounds like a model airplane or a high speed blender, you've come to the wrong place.

Because the CM400 Custom is low, mellow and throaty.

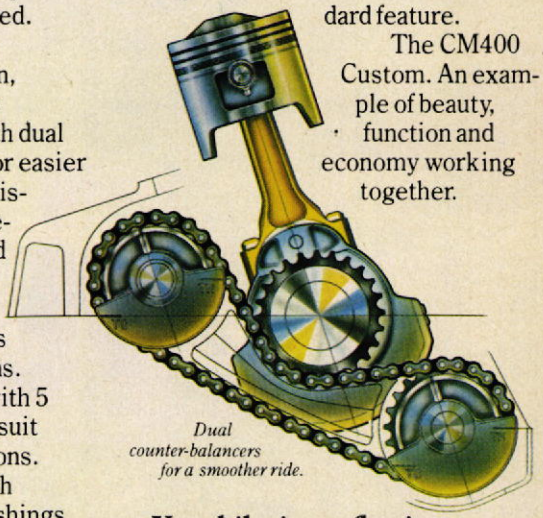
And that beautiful sound isn't just cosmetics. It comes from Honda's Power Chamber™ exhaust system. The Power Chamber system increases mid-range power and reduces noise so the muffler assemblies can be made shorter and lighter.

Another feature that's more than just looks is the highlighted aluminum ComStar™ wheels. Standard on every CM400 Custom.

These beautiful wheels combine the best characteristics of both spoke and cast wheels. Unlike cast wheels, ComStars provide some radial flex. And, at the same time, they're more rigid than spoke wheels in an axial direction.

ComStars are also easy to clean, don't require routine spoke maintenance and have been designed to accept tubeless tires. Another standard feature.

The CM400 Custom. An example of beauty, function and economy working together.



Dual counter-balancers for a smoother ride.

Your bike is a reflection on you.

Chrome isn't the only thing that shines on the Honda CM400 Custom. You will too.

Because this is a bike that gets people looking. With envy. And interest. At the classic pullback handlebars. The custom low slung seat that puts you only 29.5 inches off the street. The 3.4 gallon teardrop fuel tank. The beautiful two-tone paint. And the highlighted aluminum ComStar wheels.

The Honda CM400 Custom. You may just feel you got a little too much for your money.

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Kerker Exhaust Systems are available direct by mail. Enclose name, address and zip code, plus the following information: Motorcycle make, model and year. 4 into 1 exhaust systems: $219 in chrome/$209 in black/plus $15 for shipping and handling. Kerker Catalog and Decal only, plus a free copy of "More Than Hot Air," our

KICKS ASS!

A challenge comes. Stops at the light, menacingly alongside. Smile, and slowly lower your face shield. 'Cause when that light beams green, you're going to blow him away. And no power within the universe can help him.

You've got Kawasaki's GPZ1100. The new King of the Streets. But your bullet can really fly. It's Kerker equipped. The quickest get quicker. The fastest, faster. The most powerful, more powerful. With a Kerker, an otherwise stock GPZ turned consistent 10.7's at 122 mph.

And that's the truth. We know, because unlike other manufacturers, we DIDN'T test it. Kawasaki did. And when they came back and told us that the Kerker had improved perfection, we smiled. 'Cause Kerker has always been number one. #1 in Road Racing, propelling the European Champion Kawasaki Formula Road Racing Team. #1 in Drag Racing, powering NHRA Pro-Comp Champion Geoff Masters and the KROL Racing Team. #1 in World Land Speed Records, serving Scott Spittler's GS1100 Suzuki as it set two new AMA Records at Bonneville.

Behind these successes stands the largest research and development department in all of motorcycle aftermarketing. Featuring aftermarketings best full-sized dynomometer and dyno room. Testing programs of such enormity that only the major motorcycle manufacturers can match. And turning out true bolt-on improvements, not just part numbers whose only performance is to take your money.

Beyond R&D comes the Kerker KR Series of Racing Superbike Pipes. Power innovative designs for highly modified, racing engines. The same pipes that Team Kawasaki's Eddie Lawson races with. Now available to all racers. Next comes the famous Kerker Street Series. The ultimate in power, performance and style for stock and slightly modified bikes. Featuring the perfect fit, optional baffles, and a new, rust resistant triple duri-nickel undercoated chrome finish. Kerkers: the only pipes you should ever settle for.

Ask the man who owns one. He'll tell you: Kerker Kicks Ass!

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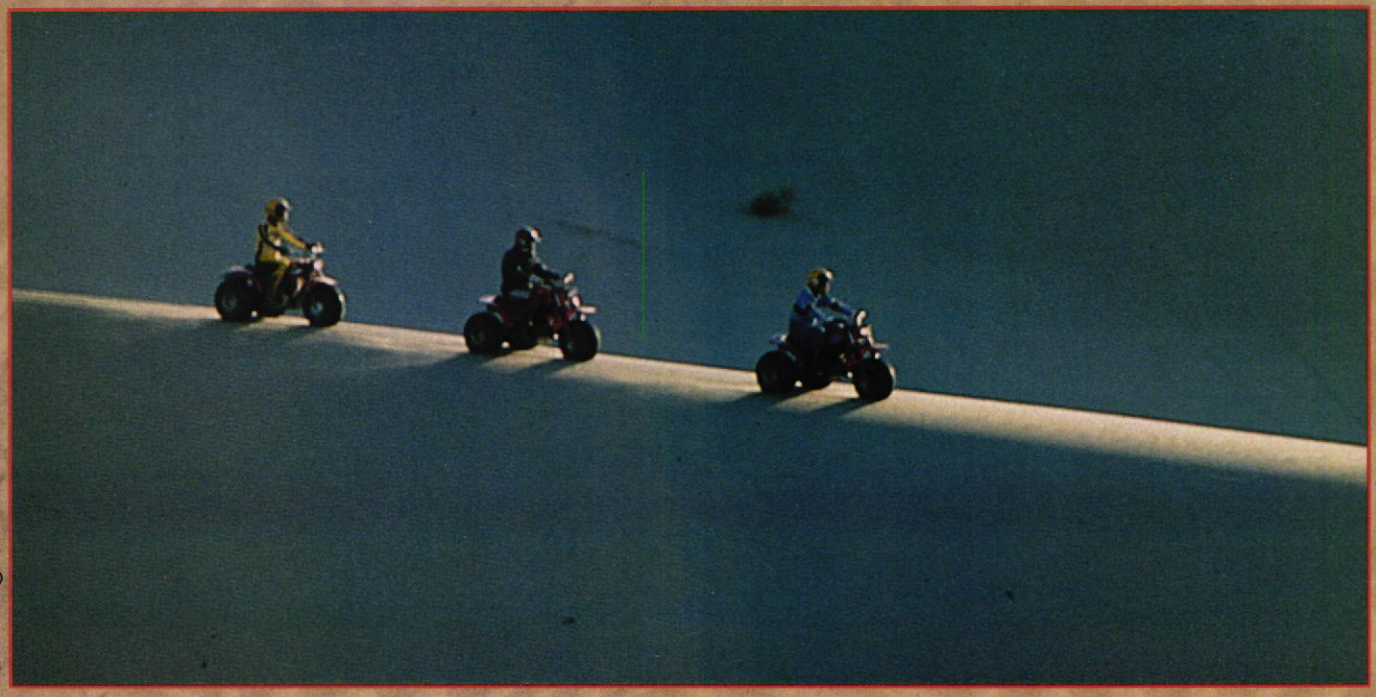
TRAINING WHEELS CAN BE FUN:

Hey! Watch This!

ATCs are for the throttle jock in all of us.

BY DON FULLER



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 LARRY GATZ

This was going to be a day for throttle jocks, all right. The little pep talk given by the Honda riders amounted to a discussion of all the ways we could crash. Don't put your foot down, they said, or a rear wheel will run over it. Don't turn too suddenly, they advised, or you'll get spit off the high side. Watch out for the way the desert sun plays tricks on your eyes, they warned, or you'll run splat into a dune or blast straight off into space and not know it until you wake up under your machine. Then they told us that we were going to crash anyway. Finally, we all stood around and kind of preened, hoping that when we crashed, everybody else would see it. After all, what are days like this for, if not a dawn-to-dusk act of . . .

Hey! Watch this!

ATCs do that to you. They have done it ever since Honda invented the concept, the design and the near-generic term All-Terrain Cycle. Since Honda first released its US90 tricycle in 1970, other manufacturers have followed suit, but Honda's five different models have kept the bright red three-wheelers at the leading edge of ATC technology.

There are some very good reasons why. Most of them have to do with inventing something—and the legal advantages thereof. See, in Japan you can patent almost anything, and when Honda developed the ATC, its engineers quickly realized there were some optimum design parameters. So among other things, Honda holds ATC patents on the position, both in plan and elevation views, of the engine; the relationship between wheelbase and rear track; the location of the footpegs outside the triangle described by the three wheels in plan view. These patents are a significant part of the reason why Honda's three-wheelers are to this day state-of-the-art.

This head start has led to a near monopoly of the ATC market. There are Honda dealers in farming areas who practically survive on ATC sales. At first, the ATC was supposed to keep the family entertained at camp; it was figured as a putt-around for fishing and camping that the kids couldn't tip over (if they were careful). Gradually these characteristics took hold on Dad's imagination—*Hey! Watch this!* Soon ATC sales took off as Dad explained to Mom that he really had to have one of those three-wheeled things because it would be so helpful in getting around the farm and all. And besides, it wouldn't tip over (if you were careful). The utilitarian angle spawned a gaggle of baskets and trailers for hauling corn seed, hay bales, chicken feed and manure.

Now, since Dad could get three sheets to the wind and still not fall off (if he was careful), the ATC made a great Sunday afternoon, south-forty rat racer—*Okay! Watch this!*—while Mom was stuck cleaning the dinner table. And as soon as there are two things with engines in town, they naturally are going to be raced; so like stock-car racing, ATC competition took hold. Guys were trading their dirt bikes for ATCs, or at least buying them instead of dirt bikes. Before long, the 70cc and 110cc four-stroke engines weren't enough. Honda delivered a larger ATC with a 185cc four-stroke engine. But even that wasn't enough and Dads everywhere kept looking for more horsepower. In the meantime, the ATC endured quite an assortment of applications unforeseen by Honda. A light rider with a good sense of balance can make one float, even if steering across a pond is a lost cause. And that means an ATC will go a lot of places where a police swamp boat won't, which in some sections of this country makes it a dandy moonshine runner. All along, ATC technology hasn't changed much, though. The soft high-flotation tires offered the only suspension. The engines were simple. And automatic clutches were fitted so anybody

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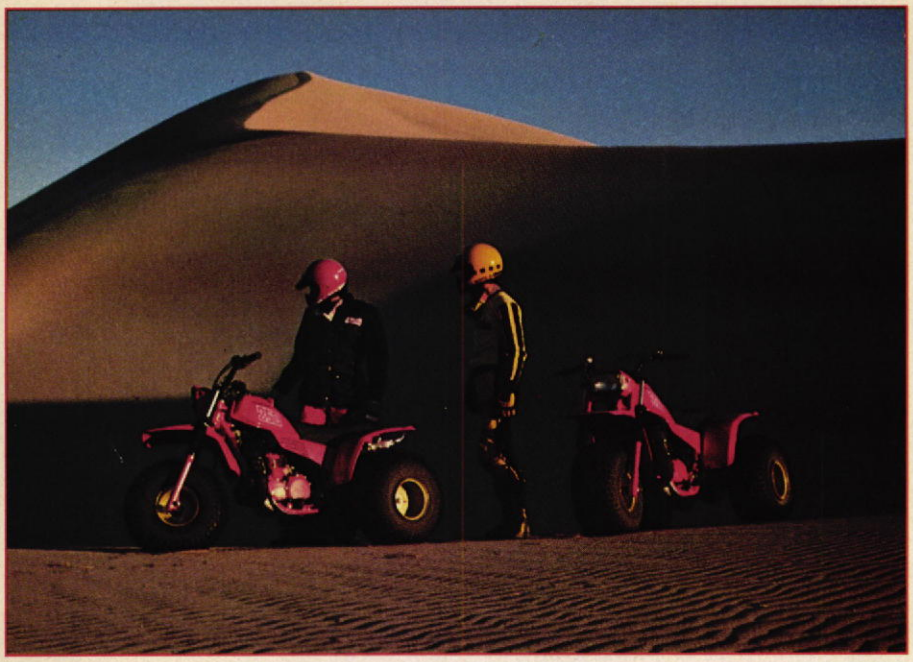
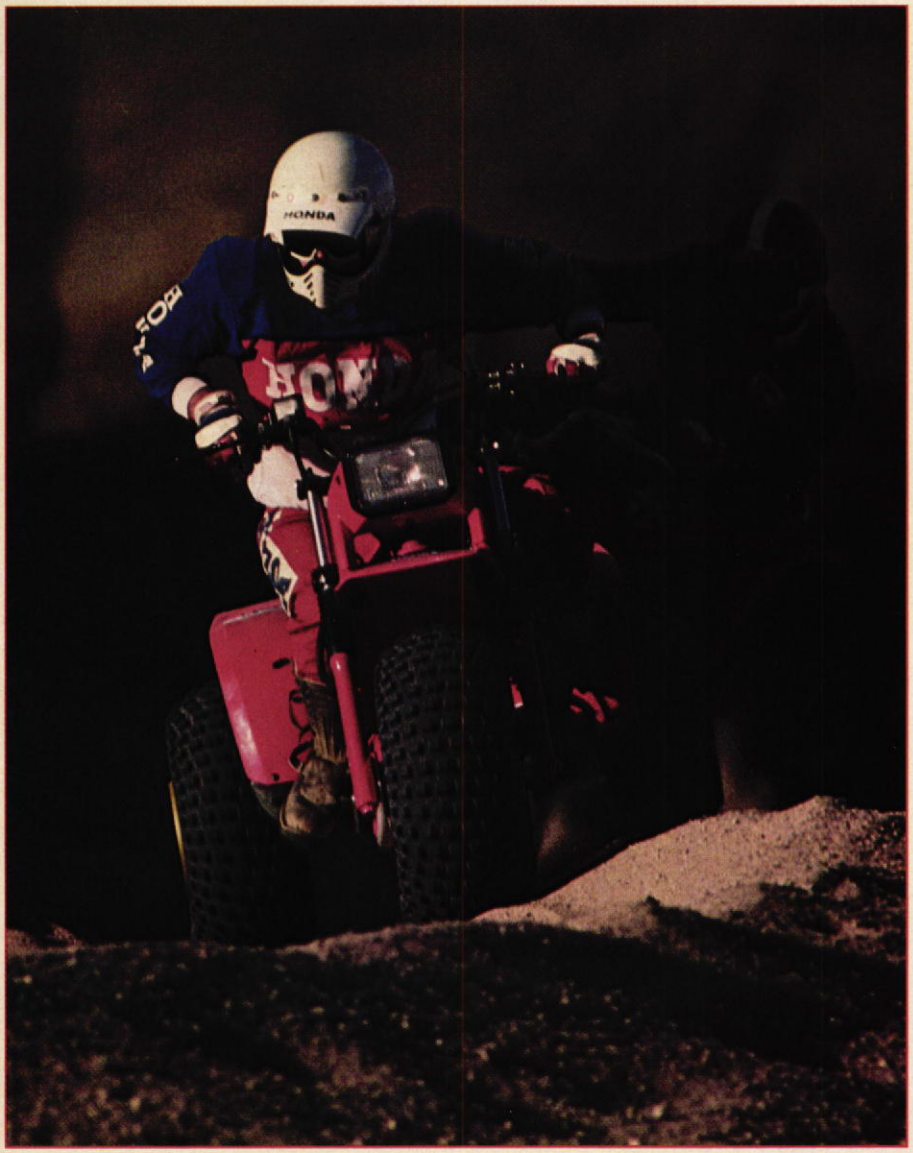


ATC excitement unearths the children in all of us

Recapturing youth means riding grown-up trikes in a giant sandbox.



could hop aboard an ATC and ride it.

With all this in mind, when the call came in from Honda to go out to a secret place and ride some ATCs, we yawned. Hauling hay bales is not our idea of a good time. Of course, we hadn't taken into account Honda's new ATC250R, and its equally new air-spring fork, single-shock rear suspension, front disc brake, five-speed gearbox and, oh yeah, a 250cc two-stroke engine loosely derived from the CR250 motocrosser that will push the three-wheeler to a top speed of 52 mph.

Hey! Watch this for sure!

Moreover, the secret place proved to be DuMont Dunes, way out in the desert near Death Valley. It looks like the Sahara in miniature, with sand dunes 1000 feet high, and it has to be the greatest ATC playground in the world. If there's a better rat racin', ridge runnin' place in creation, we don't know about it. It's an ATC jungle gym, built just for showing off. And after all, showing off is what got people interested in ATCs anyway.

After we learned about all the ways to crash, we got a crash course in how not to. It seems that an ATC with its live rear axle is more like a car than a motorcycle, and it likes to go straight. Balance and footwork play a big part in maneuvering. To turn, you lean to the inside while putting your weight on the outside footpeg. This unweights the inside rear tire just enough to let it slip so the tricycle can pivot, while the location of your body to the inside of the turn should keep you from tumbling off the high side. Got that? It's a little like skiing. Only you can also wheelie a Honda ATC until its rear grab bar drags in the sand, because the bar keeps it from coming over on you. Just push the front wheel away and you can recover, by all accounts. Should be a snap, figured Gingerelli, so he jumped on a three-wheeler, yanked its rope-starter and took off over a dune. He did a flying wheelie all right, and he pushed the front wheel down, too. The ATC recovered. Gingerelli fell off the back, though. The day wasn't five minutes old.

We hadn't even gotten to the 250 yet. It's hard to imagine a kid using something as rorty as the ATC250R to putt around a campground. The engine is detuned and fitted with a heavy flywheel like Honda's shorttrack motor, but it's hardly mild. As a result, it pulls like a power winch. Damn, the thing *will* go 52 miles per hour!

You betcha—watch this!

Convinced that the ATC250R represents as big a leap in technology as a CR450R does over a CT110, we ratted off across the desert in search of bowls. You see, the wind blows from every direction at

DuMont, so the sand piles up in 360-degree bowls hundreds of feet deep. We finally stopped on the edge of an immense open hole in the sand. Typically, Gingerelli went into it without a second thought and then came out again. It looked pretty easy. My turn. I eased the 185S to the edge of what looked like a sheer cliff . . ..

Yo momma!

I sailed down the slope like Franz Klammer schussing a mountain, the little engine busting its gut at about a million rpm, hoping to build enough speed to make it up the other side of the bowl. Only I couldn't. I hit the bottom and clawed up the other side, my stomach reeling from vertigo. Look up and all you can see is sand giving way to sky. But to get out . . . ah, to get out. I tried frontal assaults, only to sputter to a stop bare feet from the edge. I tried creeping up to the rim at an angle. Nothing worked. A rider came down with the ATC250R and offered to trade tricycles, but I had ridden that sumbitch 185 into that hole and I was going to ride it out. Finally, running around the sides of the bowl in an ever-higher spiral, I managed to make it up.

If the 250R is what the ATC is coming to, I'm for it. All that speed might seem loony, but you really have a lot more control. It's actually easier to ride. There's enough horsepower to boost you out of any hole you get into. The suspension keeps you from bouncing around too much, making it easier and safer to cross open country. It also does tremendous wheelies. And you can jump it without tearing the tires off the rims.

What we found was that ATCs are pretty neat stuff, snide comments about tricycles to the contrary. If you're a seasoned rider, ATCs will give you some trouble until you adapt to the different riding style—because ATCs are nothing like motorcycles. But adapt you will. And if you have no off-road experience, the ATC is a great way to start. It stays upright most of the time, the big tires keep it from getting mired down, and it will go anywhere. And a big plus, as we discovered, is the fact that it's almost indestructible. I tumbled one like a toy all the way down the side of a bowl, followed it to the bottom, got it right side up, started it, and took off. It didn't have a scratch and neither did I. It seems the big soft tires and general shape of the thing keep the ATC from doing harm either to itself or you. We really don't know how you could break one. And we tried.

Above all, the ATC is for the throttle jock in all of us, seasoned rider or not. For a change, everyone now has the chance to show-off in the dirt and enjoy it . . .

Hey! Watch this! •

Trike Trix

• The other ATCs looked like tiny red ants down below. I was balanced atop a sand dune almost 1000 feet high, and the ATC had its drive wheels hanging off on either side of the ridge. I was ridge ridin', balancing the lead wheel on the ridge's back at about 10 mph and doing everything I could to keep the trike pointed straight. Any mistake, and I'd be hanging onto the handlebar as the ATC snowballed to the bottom.

So far, I wasn't doing too badly at the sort of show-off gymnastics that ATCs are meant for, especially the ATC250R. Then the lead wheel tugged unexpectedly to the left and I found myself committed to the fall-line straight down the slope. The ride down was fun. Out of control, but fun. I stood up on the pegs, opened the throttle and watched as the ants quickly turned into ATCs with men on them. They all observed my tri-rooster tail down the dune, waiting to see what I'd do—probably hoping the ATC would go belly up, and me belly down.

"Hey," I yelled to myself inside my Moto III, "Watch this!" When the dune spilled out into the opening arms of the flat below, I pitched the ATC into a slide that nearly high-sided me. The inside rear wheel lifted and my *formicidae* friends saw air beneath it. They all knew that when air interrupts the intimate kiss of tire and sand, it's sure to spell c-r-a-s-h. They might have been smiling, but I wiped those grins clean off when I gently rolled off the throttle, dialed in some opposite lock to the steering . . . and saved it. The airborne wheel didn't come to earth again, either. Not yet, anyway— I was crab leggin', riding on two wheels.

Crab leggin' is fun, because it's the next best thing to crashing. Think of it as a *sustained* crash. And that takes nerve and balance—or no brains. Certainly no common sense, because any fool who almost crashes deserves to crash. So thought my ant-friends, I'm sure.

Since I didn't spill, it was my turn to scoop them into a little sandbox folly. I settled my mount onto all three tires again, and broadslided to a halt.

"Let's go over to the next dune," I yelled as sweat fogged my goggles. "Follow me." They did. Suckers. Beyond the next dune lay a menace that only DuMont Dunes has. It's called Bowl Fever. And when it contaminates your soul, there's nothing to do but ride it out.

Fuller was the first victim. I pointed to the bottom of a 200-foot bowl, a freak of topography that can be found only at DuMont. I told him to try it. He bought it, and I watched as his ATC slowly rolled into the jaws of the bowl. The only way out was the same way in. I chuckled as the bowl's ground-quartz teeth slowly devoured him. He was aboard the ATC185S, which had just enough power to climb out—if he did everything right.

Once he reached the bottom, he became frantic as he searched the rim for an easy path out. His ATC climbed the opposite wall, then coughed and sputtered as he ran out of momentum in the last 50 feet before the rim. He had to pivot sharply and head down again, trying to build up speed for an assault on the wall I was on. Ascending the sides of the bowl from a dead stop at the bottom would be futile. But he didn't make it up my side, either.

After a half hour, he got the hang of it, and began a little rim runnin'. By riding around the circumference of the bowl, he built up speed as he neared the top, then suddenly swooped downward like a fighter pilot about to strafe a target. And with the added speed, he hit the bottom at a furious clip and climbed out of the bowl.

"Gee, Don. What kept you?"

The rest of the day fell into the same pattern. Everyone took turns suckering the others into oddball stunts, inwardly hoping to see a good four-pointer—a crash in which the ATC's three wheels hit the ground just as the pilot's body thuds to the earth. You see, you don't ride ATCs—you do tricks on them. And in this case, trix aren't just for kids.

—Dain Gingerelli

MINITEST:

Yamaha XJ550 Maxim

The tightwad's hot rod.

• The Maxim 550 looks like a bike just for townies. You've got a chassis as light and nimble as a moped and an engine that drinks fuel in thimble-size doses, too. Wrap the whole business in urban guerilla bodywork, and there you are.

Lucky for us, the Maxim isn't your typical urbo-bike. The engine is the secret. Instead of embarrassing you by gasping for breath when you hit the starter button, the Maxim motor answers the call to action like a liter-size engine. So while 400cc twins are warming up at curbside, you can ride the Maxim four into traffic. No longer will you have to give up an eight-block lead to the crosstown bus. As a result, the Maxim adapts itself to the average American motorcyclist's six-mile trip with perfect equanimity. But even better, the Maxim 550 looks forward to the weekend as much as you do. It might be rational transportation during the week, but on Sunday the Maxim puts on its Superman suit.

When you calibrate the Maxim's dimensions with your eyeballs, you'll be surprised that it looks more like a 400 than a 550. Compared to Yamaha's own XS400, the Maxim has a 0.8-inch *lower* seat height, a 1.4-inch longer wheelbase and only a 31-pound weight handicap. The four-cylinder engine also measures only one half-inch farther across the cases than the XS400 twin, because Yamaha located the four's alternator behind the cylinders instead of on the end of the crankshaft. When it's beneath you, the Maxim feels far more like a 400 than a 550, too. There's always room to ride, whether you're squeezing between a bus and a taxi in traffic, or sliding into the slot between the workbench and the station wagon in your garage.

But it's the engine's performance that makes the Maxim more than just an average urban guerilla. You can forget about warm-up stutters and erratic throttle response. Roll on the gas and the Maxim responds as cleanly as a big bike. There's sufficient horsepower to terrorize the on-ramps (13.0-second quarter-miles are possible) and yet you'll see the gas pump only at 50 mpg intervals.

It's no wonder the Maxim adapts to the urban environment so well. We have here a classic example of a bike with a great power-to-weight ratio. Fortunately for Sunday riders, this first principle of metro motorcycles also corresponds to the first law of high performance. And that means the 550 Maxim attacks a country road just as fiercely as it does a traffic snarl.

You don't have to look far for the evidence. At its 9500-rpm redline the eight-valve engine produces the most thrilling sound this side of a Z-1, thanks to Yamaha's new sawed-off pipes. Low-rpm punch is backed up by a substantial thrust of power as you cross the 6000-rpm mark. Furthermore, large doses of rpm won't fatigue you, thanks to the engine's rubber mounts. The chassis also aids and abets your country road fantasies. The same light weight, low center of gravity and crisp steering that help the Maxim unsnarl traffic encourages you to attack apexes. In every way, in fact, the Maxim duplicates the Seca 550's goodness on the street, despite its fat 16-inch rear tire and slightly slower steering geometry.

The Maxim fails only when it comes to comfort. Anyone taller than five-foot-eight will feel as cramped as a basketball player on the subway, even though the fairly flat handlebar is intended to provide more living room than the average Special bar. The seat is the primary culprit. The huge hump for the passenger confines you to a small flat platform next to the tank. And since the seat is as thin as possible to reduce seat height, there's not much insulation from bumps. It's ironic that bikes designed in the American comfort-conscious idiom continue to offer cramped riding positions and low-tech seats.

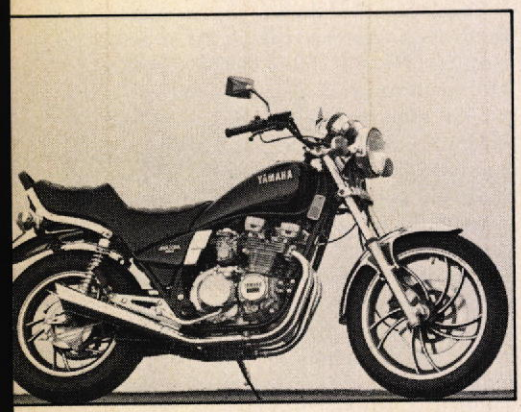
In the end, though, the Maxim offers the most rational alternative of any downscale urbo-bike. And that's because it's just as good on the weekends as it is Monday through Friday.

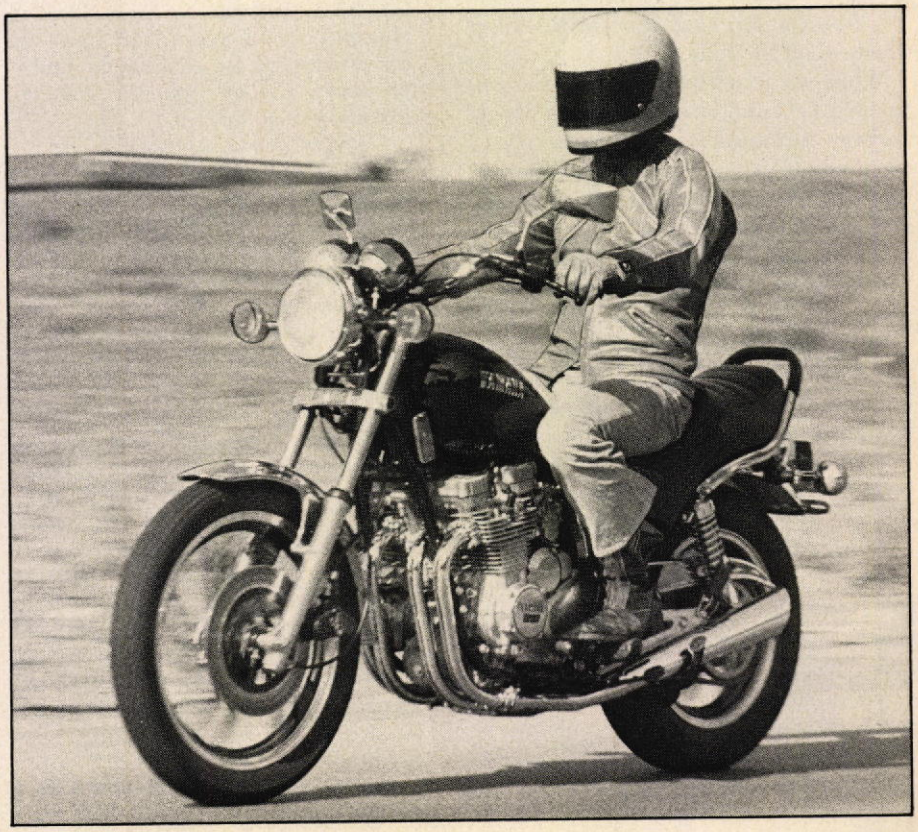
—*Michael Jordan*

YAMAHA XJ550 MAXIM

Importer: Yamaha Motor Corporation (U.S.A.)
6555 Katella Avenue
Cypress, California 90630

Category	street
Suggested retail price:	$2499
Engine type	four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke	57.0mm x 51.8mm
Displacement	528.7cc
Carburetion	four 28mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork / wheel travel	36mm stanchion tube diameter / 5.8 in. (147mm)
Rear shocks / wheel travel	4.0 in. (102mm)
Wheelbase	56.0 to 57.0 in. (1422 to 1448mm)
Seat height	30.5 in. (775mm)
Weight	424 lbs. (192kg)
Top speed (calculated)	113 mph (181 kph)
Fuel consumption	50 to 52 mpg (21 to 22 km/l)
Warranty	6 months
Available colors	New Yamaha Black, New Ruby Red





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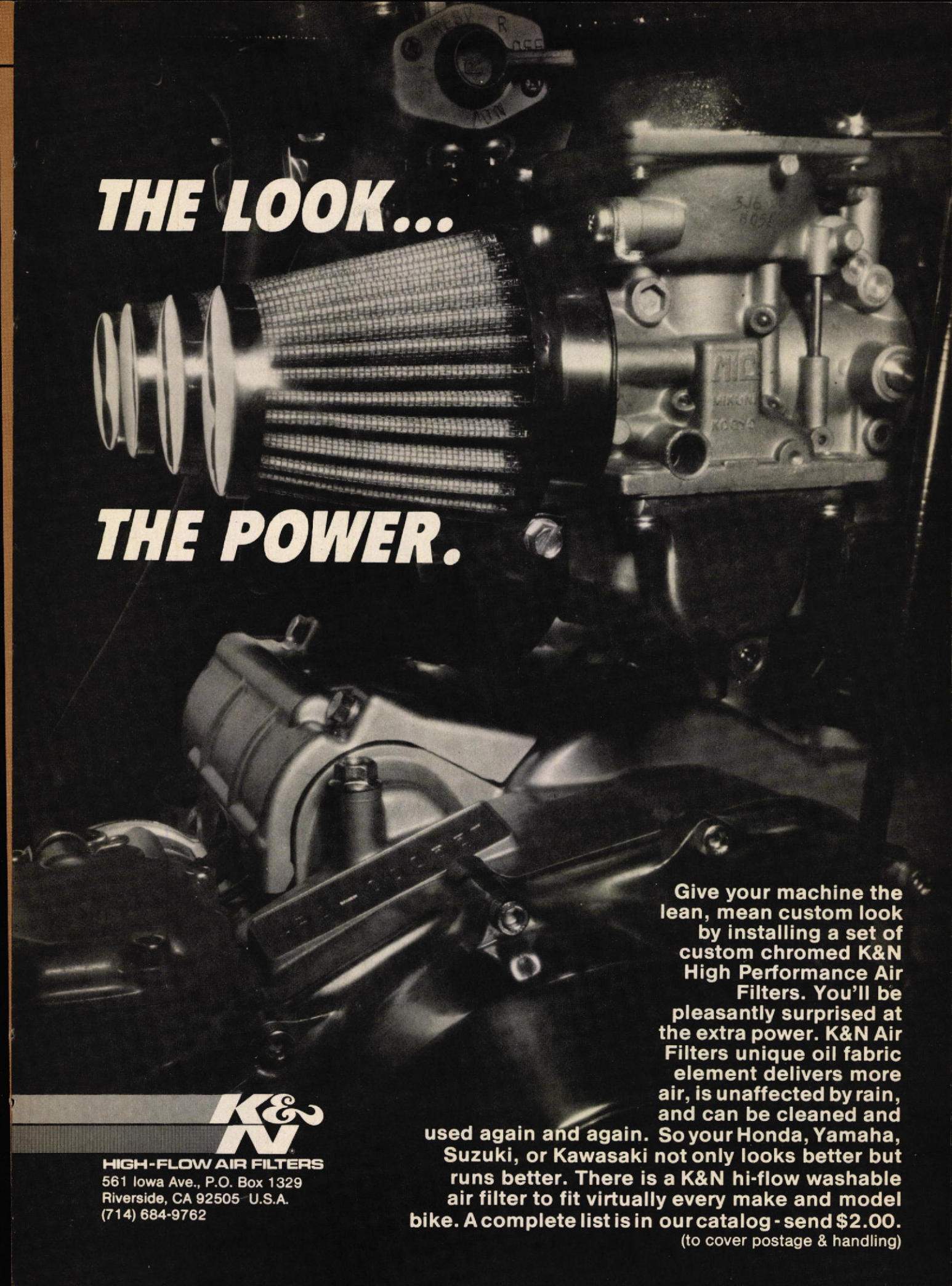

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(714) 684-9762

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

The BagMan Tank Bag

Think of it as the snappy compromiser.

• If you haven't had much experience with tank bags, you probably can't quite figure out why so many that look so much alike are being hawked at you these days. All tank bags ought to be more or less equal, right? Wrong. Because while tank bags promise to be the Great Compromisers of the motorcycle world—capable of turning your naked 750F into a Gold Wing in 20 minutes—in fact, they often turn out to be frustrating failures, and sometimes, outright frauds that make life harder, not easier.

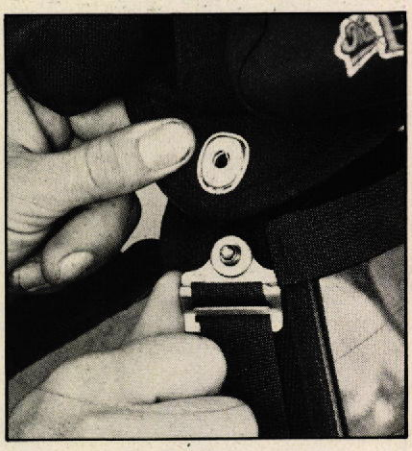
This is because some bags require outrageously complex mounting systems, because some are so poorly designed that they flap around almost at will even when their mounting harnesses are snugged down tight enough to bend your downtubes, because some don't allow easy access to your gas cap, some aren't waterproof, some don't have enough adjustment fore-and-aft to allow clearance for the handlebars, and some, the evil few, combine all those nasty traits.

Renaissance Leather's "BagMan" tank bag is definitely not one of the nasty brigade. For $56 you get a 14-liter Cordura nylon tank bag equipped with inner stiffeners at each corner, side pockets, two-way main zipper, fleece bottom for tank protection, a rain cap, clear vinyl top over the map pocket, removable, belt-mountable pouch, mounting harness and spare straps. Your eye will naturally be drawn to the bag itself (also available in brown or tan and in an 18-liter size, which retails for $65 and which assigns the fleece double duty as a sissy-bar loop), but it's the harness that's the star of this BagMan ensemble.

Unlike many of the current bags, this tank bag will never squirm around on your tank, thanks to that harness. Instead of routing straps around the steering head and under the seat to locate the bag only fore-and-aft, BagMan's designers have made a saddle-style harness that snags the bag at all four corners. You drop the harness on your tank, slip the straps under it and back to the buckles, tighten both straps and adjust the snaps, and zap! Instant touring bike, once the bag is snapped on. Fillups are a cinch: pop the forward snaps, lift the bag. If the cross-strap covers the gas cap (as it did on a BMW and 750 Seca), no problem; loosen the fore buckle and slide the cross-strap aft. You can leave the rear strap tight with the bag still snapped onto it. In all, it's about the least demanding system I've come across, and certainly the best at anchoring the bag.

The tank bag itself does yeoman duty. With the stiffeners at each corner, the bag doesn't collapse like a crippled blimp when you haven't stuffed it full, which also aids in minimizing that annoying wiggling of the bag. The side pockets are good-sized, the low, wide shape of the main compartment allows some chance of maximum handlebar clearance, the rain cap goes on easily and keeps it all dry as a bone, and, in short, the only fault I can find with the BagMan is its map-window, which is slightly frosted and thus demands the map to be pressed tight against the vinyl. Otherwise, the BagMan system is simple, clean and, to my mind, the best of the Great Compromisers. It's available from Renaissance Leather, Inc. Homer, Illinois 61849; phone (800) 637-1198 and in Illinois, (217) 356-1020.

—Steve Thompson



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 VIC HUBER

Bagman Tankbag converts a sport bike into the perfect touring compromise

Tank topper swallows loads of gear and stays out of arms way.

KAL-GARD ENGINE LUBRICANTS & COATINGS.

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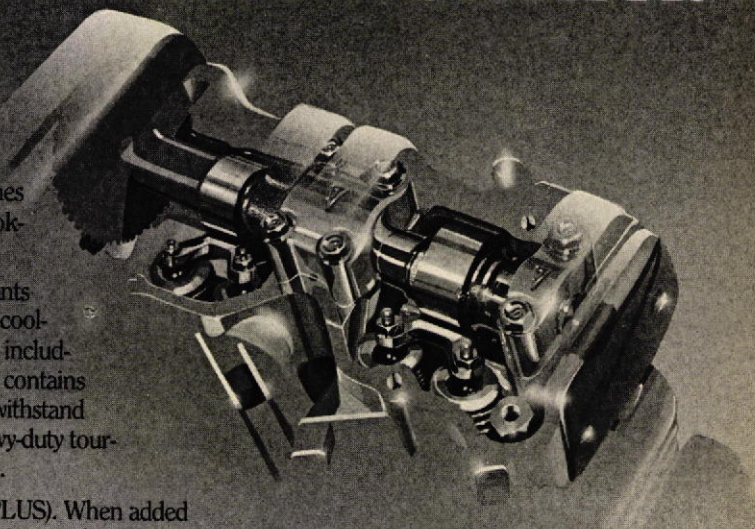


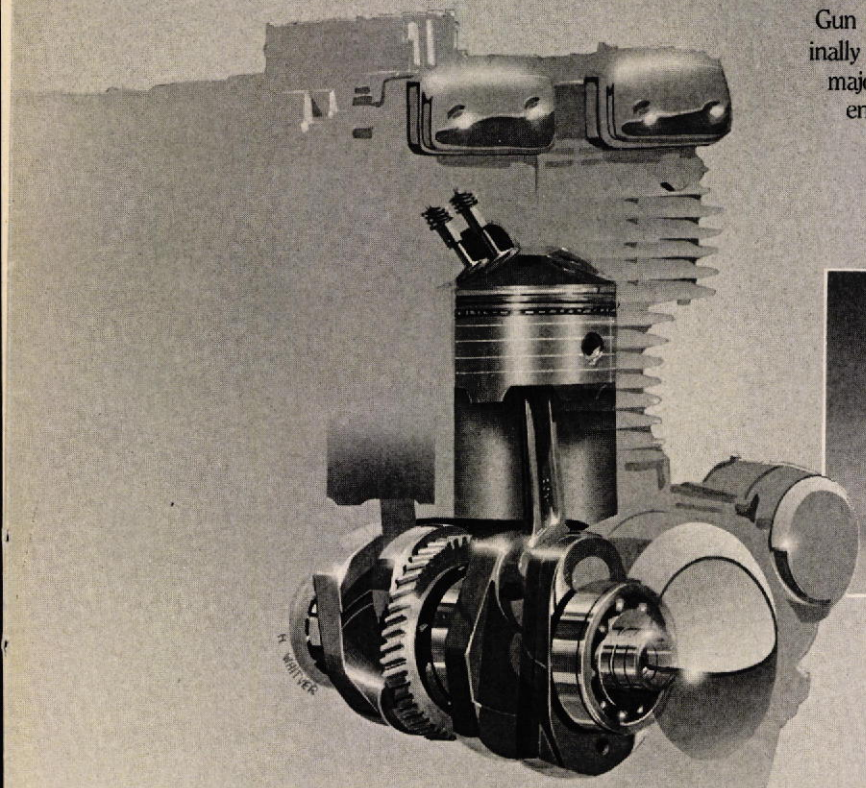
Kal-Gard engine lubricants and coatings are the result of extensive research and testing and years of experience in aerospace lubrication (we provide lubrication for millions of aircraft parts every month).

Kal-Gard 2 is a high-technology two-stroke lubricant that combines the best of petroleum synthetic oils in one package. It reduces smoking and carbon formation while greatly extending engine life.

Kal-Gard 4 and 4-PLUS are four-stroke high temperature lubricants that are specially formulated for use in motorcycle engines with air-cooling or wet clutches. Both meet the very highest of SAE ratings, including those for turbocharged engines. Kal-Gard 4-PLUS also contains molybdenum disulfide (moly), a proven aerospace lube that will withstand 350,000 psi without breaking down. It is especially valuable for heavy-duty touring or competition, when "the ultimate in lubrication" is mandatory.

Engine Gard is our moly oil additive (not necessary if you use 4-PLUS). When added to your engine and transmission, it will reduce operating friction and temperature, greatly extend engine life and provide a modest increase in useable horsepower.

Piston Kote and Gear Kote are internal engine coatings that are designed to drastically reduce friction and wear on the treated parts. The engine must be disassembled to use these coatings, but the results are worth the effort. Major motorcycle racing teams around the world use these coatings exclusively. Piston Kote is blended for use on pistons only, while Gear Kote is great for all transmission parts, cams, valves, etc. It can be applied to steel, magnesium, titanium, or other alloys.



Gun Kote is our high performance heat-dissipating coating. Originally developed for the military, Gun Kote is now used by most major exhaust system companies for their black pipes, and most engine builders wouldn't think of racing an engine without it. It *really* works.

Kal-Gard is proud to manufacture "the ultimate in coating and lubricants" for your bike. We cost a little more but we're *sure* your engine is worth it!

KAL-GARD®

All Kal-Gard products are available by direct mail: Kal-Gard 2 pt. $4.25; 4 qt. $3.95; 4-Plus qt. $4.95; Engine Gard $7.95; Gun Kote aerosol $5.85; Gun Kote, Gear Kote, Piston Kote pts. $7.66 ea. Send check or M.O. plus $2.00 freight & handling per item to Kal-Gard. 16616 Schoenborn St., Sepulueda, CA 91343.

12-Month Unlimited Mileage Warranty

*Offered only in the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska. Refer to U.S. Suzuki "GS Model Limited Warranty Policy" at Suzuki dealerships. A similar warranty is offered in Canada.

fills the gap between cruisers and cafes.

You say, you'd like something a bit more traditional than a low-riding cruiser or sporty cafe?

Say no more. Suzuki has the perfect bikes for you.

Namely, the new GS-450T and GS-550T.

Styling is traditional. Conventional-type handlebars. Moderately stepped saddle. Clean, classic lines.

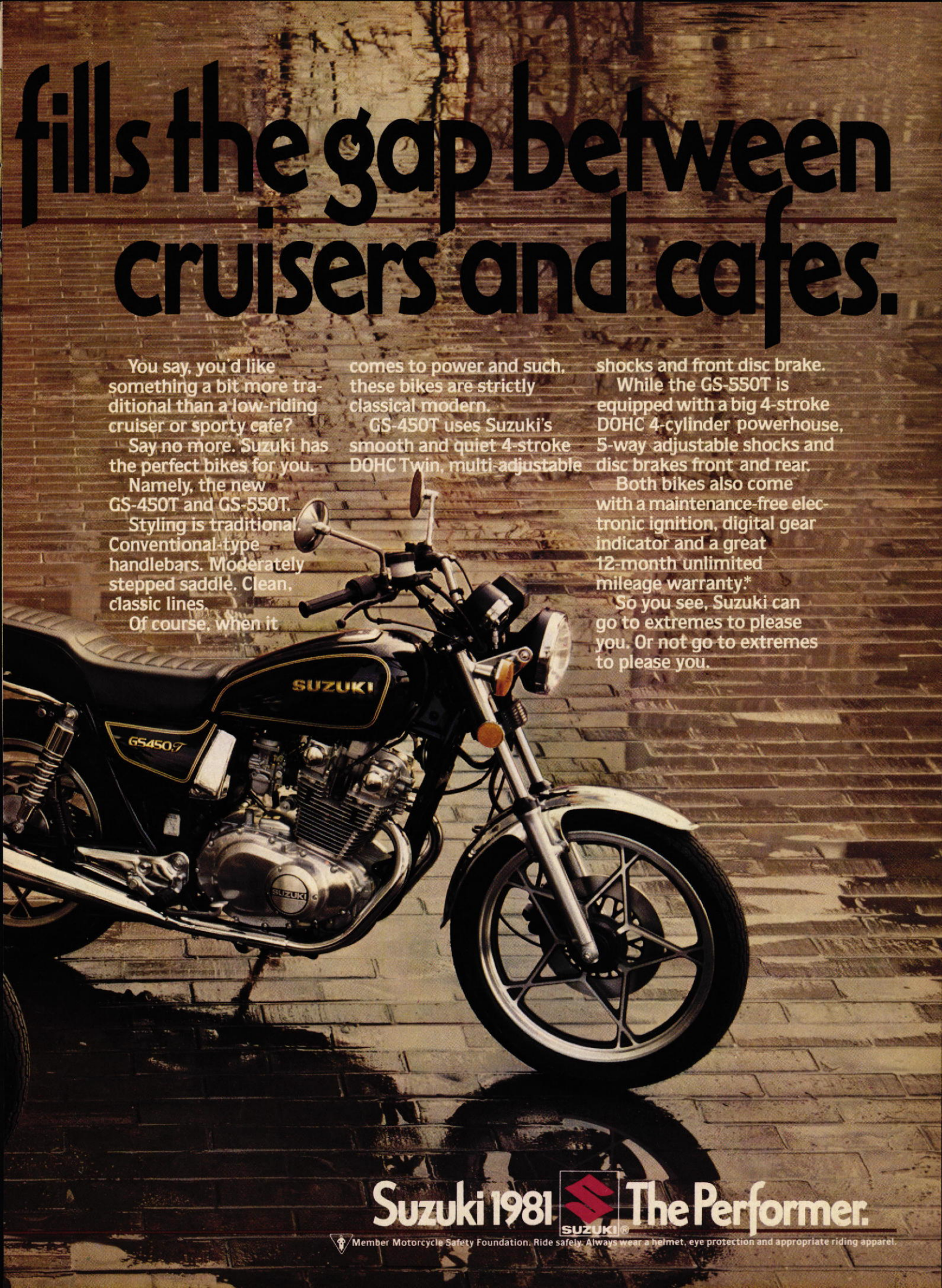
Of course, when it comes to power and such, these bikes are strictly classical modern.

GS-450T uses Suzuki's smooth and quiet 4-stroke DOHC Twin, multi-adjustable shocks and front disc brake.

While the GS-550T is equipped with a big 4-stroke DOHC 4-cylinder powerhouse, 5-way adjustable shocks and disc brakes front and rear.

Both bikes also come with a maintenance-free electronic ignition, digital gear indicator and a great 12-month unlimited mileage warranty.*

So you see, Suzuki can go to extremes to please you. Or not go to extremes to please you.



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MINITEST:

1981 Yamaha SR500H

Stomach in, shoulders back—ride!

• Yamaha's SR500H reminds me of Jack LaLanne. You remember smiling Jack, the exercise fanatic who always makes you feel a little flabby. That's what the SR does to me—it reminds me that, as a motorcyclist at least, I'm getting a little flabby. Too many starter buttons have let my arches soften for the kickstarting routine. Too many warning lights and buzzers have lulled me into inattention to my machine. And too many cylinders have carried me in a silken cocoon of moto-isolation.

My very first visit to the SR spa started to change all of that. The 499cc thumper took one look at me, saw I was in need of some old-fashioned *involvement* and put me on a routine of starting kicks. Lots of kicks. You see, I was a bit sloppy with the choke and throttle, and that won't do when the engine gets just one chance to start per kick. The SR made its point, just like Jack LaLanne pinching my waistline and shaking his head.

My second lesson in moto-fitness came at the first busy intersection I encountered. Can you remember the feeling that, if you should accidentally kill the engine, you'd have 400 angry commuters watching while you frantically kicked and kicked? I had to admit, as I self-consciously revved the engine, that I should pay this much attention no matter *what* kind of bike I'm on. The SR was sweating me into shape.

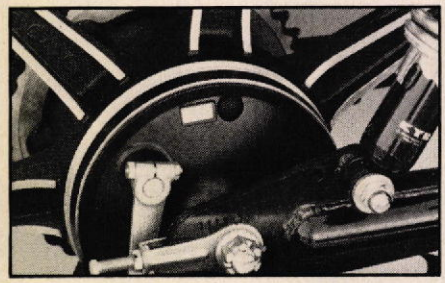
Riding the SR500 not only puts you into better trim, it continually sharpens your motorcycle senses. The obvious parts of the bike are its one-lung propulsion and its kickstarter. But the chassis, too, can hone your sensitivities for the essentials of motorcycling. The SR steers with such precision that in most cases only your ability determines how briskly you ride. The bike's light weight allows it to react to the slightest input, causing you to choose more carefully just what inputs you do, or don't, want to use. The trim, 361-pound Yamaha makes you appreciate weight—or, rather, the lack of it—in other ways, too. When you move from a standstill, the big single seems to explode from the starting blocks. Quarter-mile times can't show the ease with which the 500 accelerates. Bikes that are much faster and much heavier seem to take a moment to gather steam as the engine overcomes the resting mass. The SR just *goes*.

Since less weight means easily overcoming inertia, it also means easily quelled momentum. And the SR's brakes are up to the task. The rear drum brake, which replaced the rear disc found on pre-1980 SRs, delivers just enough predictable stopping power to complement the efficient single front disc.

Such simple virtues might not be enough for some buyers, so the Yamathumper is blessed with a dash of modern conveniences. Self-cancelling turnsignals are an Eighties engineering lick. And the suspension is thoroughly modern, with a low-friction fork and fade-free damping front and rear. Even though there is but one 87mm piston pounding at your feet, the engine doesn't spoil the comfortable ride provided by the suspension. Vibration levels are surprisingly low, and it takes a lot of miles for tingle-induced fatigue to chase you out of the saddle. So, the SR can even do duty as a short-distance cruiser.

All the traits of the SR, both simple and modern, combine to produce a conspicuously different motorcycle. Its fitness routines of careful choke and throttle work, kickstarting and awareness of precise steering input are all lessons in involvement. And the light weight and ease of maintenance cultivate an appreciation for simplicity. But the SR demands some participation and effort, sweat if you will, in order to enjoy it. Just like Jack LaLanne, the SR puts you through your paces, and refuses to do all the work for you. Therein lies the final lesson—the real pleasure of motorcycling begins with the rider, not the machine. The greater your awareness, involvement and abilities, the finer the experience of riding becomes. Any bike can bring it out in you. But few bikes distill motorcycling to its essence, sweating you into moto-fitness as a participating rider.

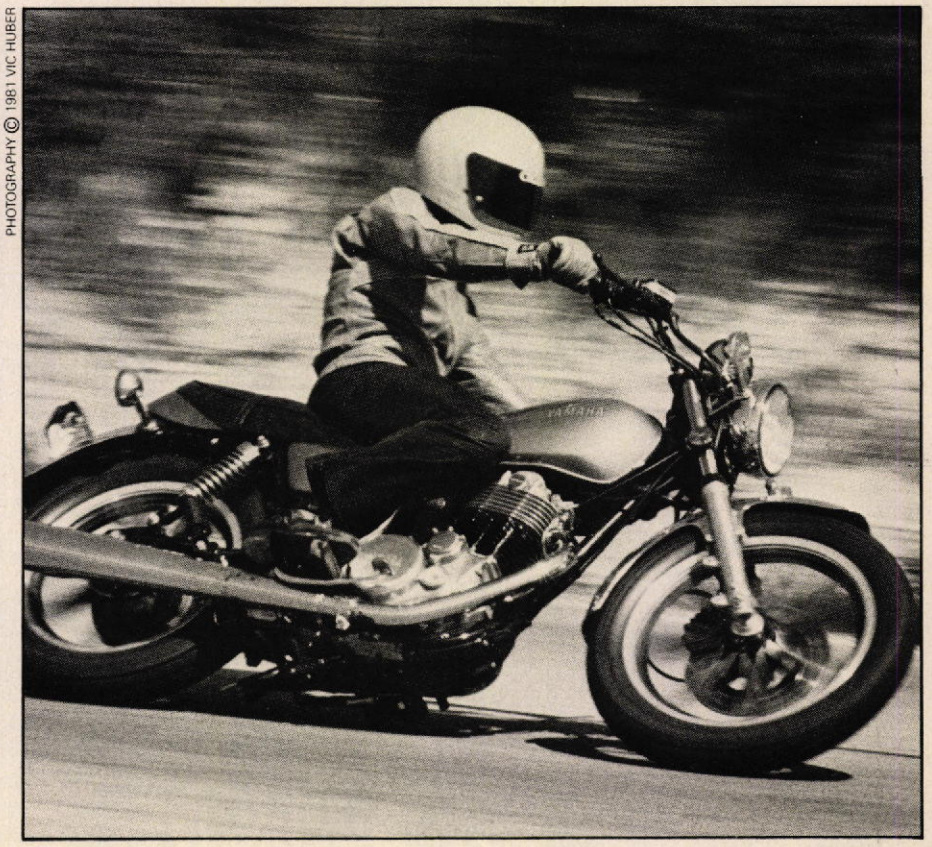
—Riley Tharp



Rear drum is standard on post-'79 SRs

Lighter, simpler than a disc.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 VIC HUBER



YAMAHA SR500H

Importer: Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A.
6555 Katella Avenue
Cypress, California 90630

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$1998
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft
Bore and stroke	87.0mm x 84.0mm
Displacement	499.4cc
Carburetion	one 32mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	5 speed
Front fork/wheel travel	35mm stanchion tube diameter/5.8 in. (146mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	4.0 in. (102mm)
Wheelbase	55.5 to 56.5 in. (1410 to 1435mm)
Seat height	32.0 in. (813mm)
Weight	361 lbs. (164kg)
Top speed (calculated)	96 mph (155 kph)
Fuel consumption	48 to 66 mpg (20 to 28 km/l)
Warranty	six months
Available colors	Star silver

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COMPARISON TEST:

Husqvarna 250WR vs. Kawasaki KDX250

Can King Richard stop the rising sun?

BY DAVID DEWHURST

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DAVID DEWHURST

All of the evidence seems pretty conclusive: If you want the best 250cc enduro bike money can buy, *don't* buy Japanese. Buy Swedish instead. Buy Husqvarna. After all, it's not the Japanese brands that have won umpteen consecutive national enduro championships, it's Husqvarna. And that proves that Huskys are superior for racing through the woods.

Doesn't it?

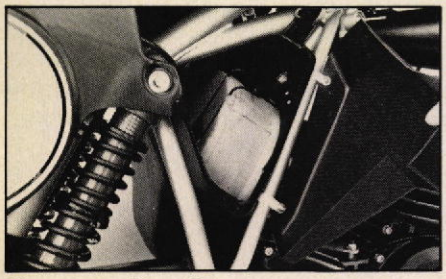
Well, maybe. And then again, maybe not. For one thing, none of the Japanese manufacturers have had a superhuman like Husky's Dick Burleson riding their bikes. And for another, the absence of enduro-championship awards in the corporate trophy case doesn't necessarily mean that a company is incapable of building a competitive enduro motorcycle. The Japanese have proven time and again that they're never to be taken lightly in this business, and the enduro-bike field—these days, at least—is no exception. Because despite having built more than their share of scarey dirt bikes in years past, the Japanese now offer numerous enduro bikes that can hold their own against the best. They make bikes that have the right kind of power and handling, bikes that can be competitive in any enduro event. Bikes, for instance, like Kawasaki's new KDX250 Uni-Trak Enduro.

Actually, wanting to find out just *how* competitive that KDX really is was the motivation behind our decision to compare it with the revered Husqvarna 250WR, the very bike that King Richard Burleson himself has developed while winning one championship after another. Fair enough, but why single out this particular Kawasaki when there are so many other for-real Japanese enduros, including IT Yamahas and PE Suzukis? Simple: It's got quite a legacy going for it. The KDX250, you see, was brewed according to the same secret formula that produced the KDX175, one of the most laudable and lovable enduro bikes ever built. Besides, the KDX is especially interesting to compare with the 250WR because Kawasaki's solutions to the unique problems posed by enduro riding contrast sharply with those of Husqvarna.

In fact, both motorcycles are so diametrically opposed in every mechanical way that it is hard to imagine them being conceived for the same purpose. At one extreme, Husqvarna uses a twin-shock rear suspension on a short chassis with slow steering geometry. It's a concept that's as old as the European hills, but Husky's track record proves that it works. Kawasaki, on the other hand, as if trying to be different, uses a single shock with a linkage-type rear suspension in a mile-long chassis with quick steering.

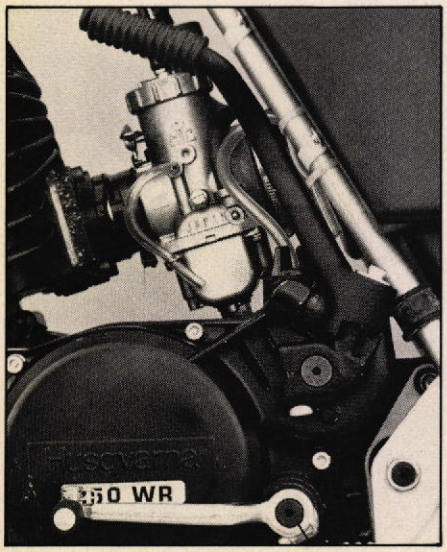
If all that were not enough, both companies disagree on the type of power an enduro motor should provide. Again, Husqvarna sticks with a tried and trusted European concept, just as it did with its suspension. In fact, the '81 WR motor is identical to last year's, with everything tuned for a broad powerband and a flat torque curve. And that's a long way from the revvy motocross motor on which the WR engine is based. But Husky engineers transformed the racy motor with the addition of just two parts.

First, to supplement the large full-circle crank, the Swedes have added a large flywheel-magneto. This gives the motor more inertia and slows its response to the throttle. To further subdue the engine, Husky fits a more-restrictive exhaust system and spark arrestor. The expansion chamber has smaller internal dimensions than the MX pipe, and this reduces the motor's snappy response at the cost of sheer power. The pipe also considerably



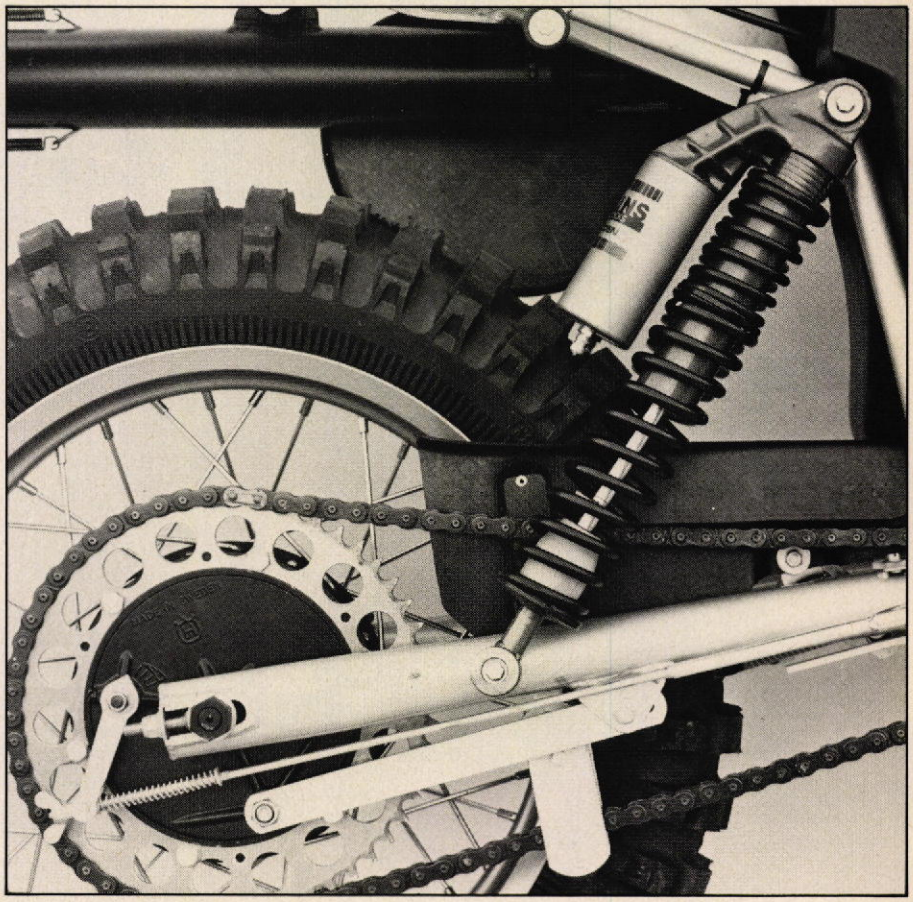
Filter removal in an instant

A model of Swedish simplicity.



Twisted starter fires the Husky easily

But you have to find neutral first.



Extended Ohlins shocks mount more vertically outside the straight Husky swingarm

Husqvarna extends Ohlins suspension quality to even greater limits.

reduces noise because of its twin-wall construction. And when the pipe is combined with a long muffler and spark arrestor, the WR becomes very quiet. At idle the Husky motor burbles along with a subdued exhaust note, and the ever-present Husky mechanical clatter is reduced by rubber blocks between the fins. It all makes the motor sound so tame that you could be forgiven for thinking that the Husky is not really a racing motorcycle at all.

The same sedate feeling persists on the trail because the six-speed WR motor is totally unhurried. Even if the Gunnar Gasser throttle is whacked open hard with the bike in its relatively tall first gear, the WR never explodes. It just rushes forward at an ever-increasing rate. There is no sudden wheelspin, no lofted front wheel, not even a kick in the pants. That's not all bad, either, since too much snap can be an embarrassment in an enduro motor. When you thread your way along a steep and narrow trail, the last thing that's needed is a great rush of power to throw you off line.

So Husky's sedate engine philosophy can be a boon on all but the fastest trails. Yet even in the dry and dusty hills of California there are times when the Husky is a delight, rolling along at low rpm and making life easy for the rider. Our only real problem came in attacking the longest hills. The WR refused to rev high enough, despite its massive 38mm Mikuni carb, to make the uphill run in one gear. And because the shift-lever throw is so long, we sometimes lost momentum before we engaged first gear.

Worse still, as the test continued, the wire mesh spark arrestor in the tail of the muffler slowly clogged with oily goop. In previous Husky tests that goop eventually stopped the motor altogether. We have found that regular cleaning with a wire brush or drilling a few larger holes in the wire screen are the only ways to ensure trouble-free service.

In complete contrast, the buzzy KDX motor never clogged up or lost an ounce of its impressive power. The Kawasaki never even bobbled above the 4000-foot level where the Husky gasped for a smaller mainjet. The KDX is just as peppy and responsive at sea level, too, where it handily outdrags the Husky. But even more important is the way in which the KDX responds to the throttle. Whatever the rider does with the twist-grip is translated directly into horsepower; no hesitation, no gradual increase, just instant power. In fact, Kawasaki has deliberately made the motor revvier this year—with more radical exhaust-port tuning, more ignition advance and a smaller external-flywheel for the CDI. Combined with precise jetting in the 36mm Mikuni carb, the KDX enduro motor is probably more responsive than the Husky is in motocross trim.

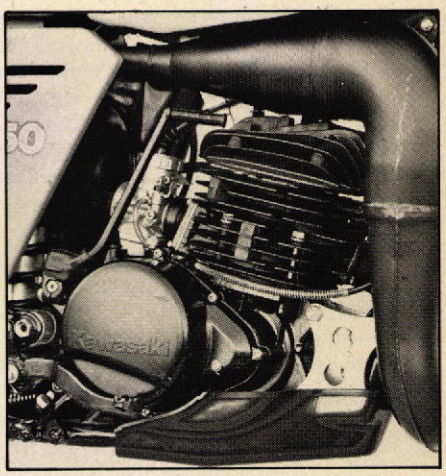
So while we had to keep the Husky wide open a lot to go fast, we almost had to hold back with the Kawasaki. The minute the gas is dialed on, the KDX flies, rushing forward at an almost frantic rate. And yet, with only 25 hp as measured on our dyno, the Kawasaki never really gets completely out of shape. Certainly, it's easier to spin the Kawasaki's 18-inch rear wheel, and we had to concentrate a little harder than on the Husky; but it also is nice to have a little instant snap when it's needed.

On tight trails the KDX's extra power rush lets the front wheel loft more easily than the Husky's, too, and that let us escape more easily when a trail-wide obstruction caught us off-guard. And thanks to six widely spaced ratios, the Kaw's gearbox always had the right gear available to make a fast getaway.

Probably the only place where the KDX motor falls short of the Husky is in gooey

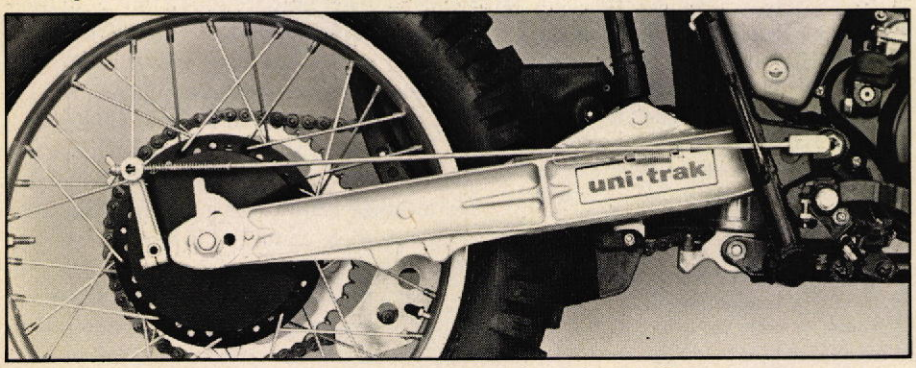
A large vinyl tool pouch lives just behind the comfortable KDX seat

A nice place to store inner tubes, but a painful place to keep hard tools.



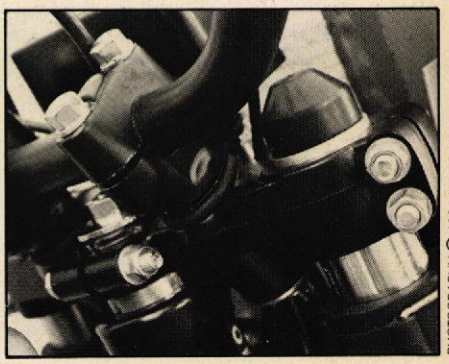
Fast and furious enduro motor

Hiding behind a tough plastic shield.



A new aluminum swingarm got its job on the designer's casting couch

Strong and light, it plays the enduro part well.



Handlebar clamps suspended in rubber

Elastic stops you from feeling shaky.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 VIC HUBER

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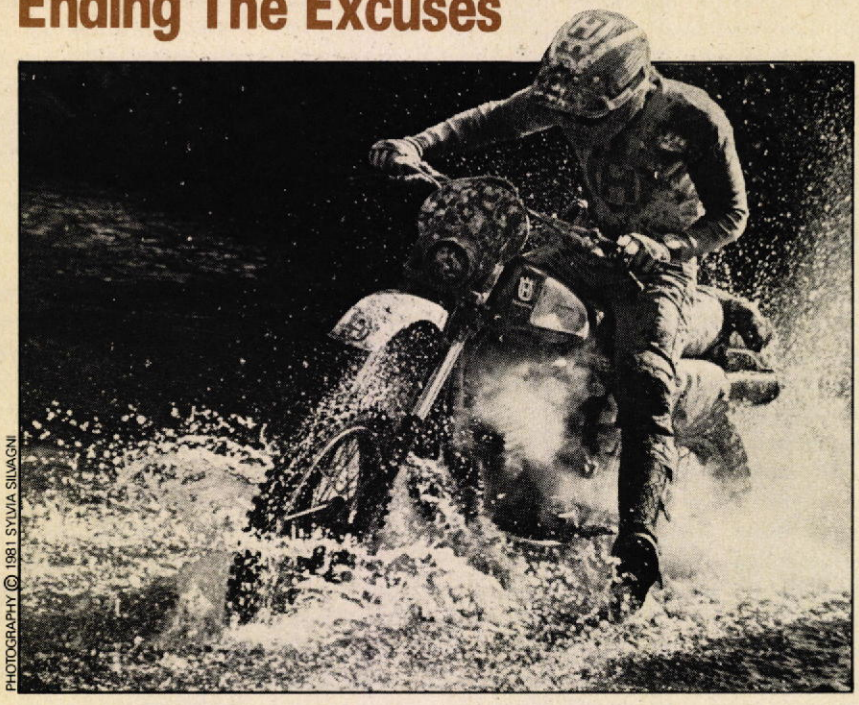
Ending The Excuses



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 SYLVIA SILVAGNI

• Gone are the days when production dirt bikes needed endless work to come close to the factory mounts. This year you can buy a Husky 250WR or a Kawasaki KDX250 and almost start on an equal footing. And if you want the tiny factory edge it won't cost an arm and a leg.

In fact, it's amazing how little work the Burlesons and Pentons of this world do to prepare for national enduros. For a start, they both change tires. Penton swaps his K390 Dunlops for a set of Hi Points, while King Richard opts for Dunlop K88s. Burleson also uses rim locks for enduro events where quick tire changes are not essential.

Husky team riders also modify the rear brake backing plate by installing a bushing in the torque arm fitting. This allows the backing plate to spin out of the way during wheel removal without unbolting the arm.

Jack Penton admits that most of his changes to a KDX are either purely personal or aimed simply at speeding up on-trail servicing. That's why he uses quick-adjust Magura levers and a Gunnar Gasser throttle, along with a different bar and grips. And, for the same reasons, Team Husky uses a Preston Petty headlamp strapped to the fork tubes.

Both teams make more serious, and expensive, changes to their suspensions. Husky riders sometimes elect to use the longer 270mm damper rod in the fork to gain extra wheel travel in fast events. And to retain the Husky's basic steering geometry, they also use a longer shock. A cheap alternative to buying a longer shock body is to simply buy a longer bottom eyelet that screws into the stock shock.

Team Kawasaki riders also change the rear suspension, but only to get the motocross Uni-Trak shock's externally adjustable damping. On some occasions the team also uses the latest motocross fork, but this change is more complex and expensive than most privateer owners can handle. The advantages are also small, and should be considered an extravagant luxury that you can win without.

You might, however, benefit from a few race-team engine changes. Husky riders, for instance, use a single-wall motocross pipe mated to the enduro muffler to give an instant power boost. And if you have a grinding wheel, you can certainly squeeze even more power out of the WR by carefully matching the liner windows with the cylinder ports. There is also a small horsepower edge to be gained from widening the exhaust port one millimeter. All these changes make the Husky engine rev more freely, and in fast events—where tractability is no great advantage—the team sometimes uses the smaller motocross ignition rotor which has to be bolted to a motocross crankshaft end pin.

Less elaborate changes are made to Team Kawasaki's motors. Indeed, experience has shown that engine internals need little work other than careful assembly. The only real power boost really comes from a KX motocross exhaust system plugged into the enduro spark arrestor which, like Husqvarna's MX pipe, lets the motor rev more freely and gives a little extra low-end, too. Then you have the same advantages as Dick Burleson and Jack Penton–and all you need to do is condition your body to be half as fast as the bike.

—David Dewhurst

mud or any other very slippery condition. That's when the WR's mild power delivery and predictable acceleration help keep the bike rolling. If confronted by a steep and slippery climb after a tight turn, for instance, the KDX is more likely to dig itself into the ground rather than crest the top. But if you want your bike to be fast *and* tractable, the KDX is the best bet in standard trim—and it is far easier to detune the KDX than it is to inject some snap into the Husky. By simply bolting last year's heavier flywheel to the crank the KDX will be instantly tamer.

Speeding up the Husky, on the other hand, calls for a bundle of money and a lot of effort. You will need the single-wall 250CR motocross exhaust—if noise rules allow it in your area—and you will have to spend plenty of time filing cylinder and liner windows into better alignment. You can even use a small motocross flywheel, but then you might be sacrificing some of the Husky's renowned tractable power. So maybe you should start thinking about which motor best suits your local terrain.

And while you are choosing radically different motors you will also have to consider if the motor's chassis is also suitable. Because, like the engines, Japanese and Swedish chassis theory is totally different, even if they both get the same job done in different ways. In the case of Kawasaki, the job calls for a more motocross-like geometry. The new KDX Uni-Trak chassis has a very long 60-inch wheelbase that is three inches longer than the Husky's. Kawasaki uses all this length to give the KDX straight-line stability and, like a semi, the KDX can't be knocked off-line easily. Yet, because of a steep 28-degree head angle and only 4.7 inches of trail, the Kawasaki still steers quickly.

Kawasaki's approach to frame geometry is very popular for motocross machinery, but it goes directly against Husky's enduro ideas. The Swedes use a *shorter* chassis for quick steering, and lots of rake and trail to maintain high-speed stability.

Real-life practice shows that both theories can work, because the two bikes are both stable and yet quick-steering. The Husky might even have a slight edge in slow going simply because its handlebar is so wide. But to avoid broken knuckles you will need to trim off a few inches of that leverage before riding through the trees. Even then, a stock WR has an edge over the KDX because of its better tires. One flick of the bar and the Barum rubber digs into the dirt, turning the Husky on a dime.

Yank the bar on the KDX and you will often swear you have a flat tire. On more than one occasion the Dunlop K390 tires

seemed uncooperative when we demanded action. And the lack of traction did not help transfer the KDX's buzzy power to the ground, either.

With a better set of tires, the handling gap between the KDX and Husky will almost totally disappear. But straight from the crate, the more-expensive Husky does have the edge. It's especially noticeable on fireroads where, despite having less power, the Husky calmly pulls away from the KDX. The 17-inch Barum rear tire just puts more power to the ground, and both ends of the bike bite better when diving deep into turns. And once slowed down, the WR will hug the inside line and exit in a controlled drift, if that is what you want.

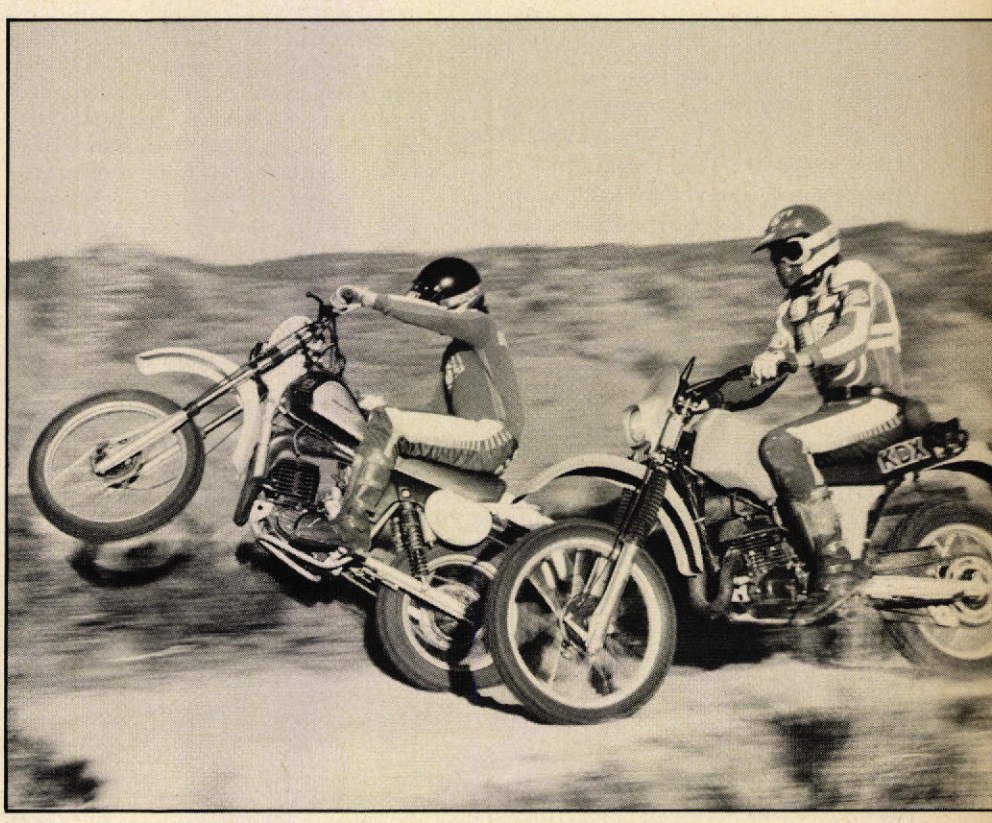
Try to slide the Kawasaki at the same point and it fishtails down the straight. The Dunlops don't let you use all the extra power, and feel vague in turns.

These differences are far less obvious when you venture off the fireroads. In the woods the KDX is a surprise because of its near-perfect precision. With its quicker steering geometry the KDX turns as effortlessly as the WR, and on faster trails the KDX responds well to body english. By leaning against the tank the Kawasaki goes immediately into a shallow turn, something that the Husky does not do naturally. The Kawasaki also responds well to fore-and-aft body positioning over deep whoops. Sitting back over the fender-mounted tool bag keeps the front end light, and the responsive motor makes it easy to power the bike from rise to rise. The Husky does not take to the whoops as readily, partly because the motor does not have the snap to loft the wheel quickly, and also because the Ohlins rear end does not have as much travel as the Uni-Trak.

The piggyback Ohlins are almost perfectly tuned for this year's steeper mounting angle, but it never seems as if their 10.3 inches of travel are fully in use at any time. It isn't that the suspension is too stiff, though, because it is possible to bottom both the spindly 35mm front fork and the Ohlins rear. On the other hand, the KDX almost seems to have *more* than the 11 inches it possesses at the rear. The four-way-adjustable Kayaba shock bottoms only rarely; and because of the KDX's other good manners, it appears that Kawasaki has managed to figure out its enduro linkage system. Indeed, the trail version seems to work even better than its motocross cousin, which has a slightly different geometry.

Everyone who rode the KDX preferred the rear spring preload reduced 8mm from the standard setting, and the fork air pressure at 8 psi. In that condition the KDX is supple over any terrain and still has enough spring rate to prevent frequent bottoming in rough going.

We left the Husky's rear springs in the third of five usable preload positions and pumped 4 psi into each fork leg to reduce bottoming without sacrificing ride comfort. Regrettably, the third element in the suspension system, the seat, is less compliant. It is almost identical to last year's, with a piece of additional foam at the front to match up with a shorter gas tank, but it had unusual areas of hard foam in what is already a firm cushion. After a long day in the saddle we knew intimately where each of those hard areas were. In every other



Charting the Changes

HUSQVARNA 250WR

Engine: The Husqvarna motor is identical to last year's except for a spark plug angled to ease removal.

Suspension: New piggyback Ohlins shocks are longer, with bottom mounts moved forward and outside the swingarm as on Husqvarna motocross models. Fork remains unchanged.

Details: Large diameter chain-adjuster bolts and spoke nipples. Harder rubber in steering stops. Stronger front exhaust clamp. Pins in the rims replace the security bolts on older models. One-way drain valve is added to the base of airbox. Vented gas cap, stronger rear brake rod and unpainted motor mounts for a better electrical ground. The gas tank is shorter and the seat longer. Motocross-style sidepanels and a wider rear fender are used.

KAWASAKI KDX250

Engine: Sixth gear added to gearbox. Compression lowered four percent to 7.3:1. Exhaust port duration increased by five degrees. Ignition timing advanced one degree and the ignition rotor is reduced in weight.

Chassis: A new chassis is used to mount Uni-Trak suspension, but last year's rake and trail dimensions are retained. Wheelbase increased by 70mm and ground clearance increased 15mm. Overall weight is 11 pounds greater than last year.

Suspension: Uni-Trak rear suspension uses a cast aluminum swingarm with a single Kayaba shock. Wheel travel is increased 10mm.

Details: Dunlop K390 tires replace last year's Goodyears. A larger exhaust and muffler now exit on the right of the machine. The rear fender is longer and wider and the seat is longer to fit behind a new tank with a half-liter less capacity. New rubber grips.

Continued

respect the Husky seat is very good. It's low enough to let even short riders touch the ground, and with the new tank rising up toward the wide bar we felt as if we were sitting *in* the bike rather than on it.

Although the Kawasaki seat is almost an inch higher than the WR's, we felt as if we were perched precariously atop the KDX. And because the Kawasaki's shorter bar is much closer to the seat than on the Husky, the bike feels a little more cramped. And yet, both bikes are very comfortable, whether the rider is sitting or standing.

There are few other ways in which the bikes are comparable, though. Indeed, if you look at the brakes you will find many differences, not the least of which is the use of floating and non-floating rear backing plates. Husky has a rigid mount while Kawasaki uses a more vulnerable full-floating system. Yet in the dry, both brakes work similarly. They are both progressive and strong, and on the trail it is easy to avoid locked wheels. In the wet the KDX still works well, but we couldn't lock the Husky's wheel if we tried. The brake shoes act like sponges, absorbing water and turning to mush. Only repeated use will dry them back into action.

Despite this problem, the Husky has a lot of appealing features. Like a speedometer to help you stay on time, steel pins rather than rim locks to make tire changes faster, and an air cleaner that pops out for service in a second.

The Husky does have equally bad points though, and its flimsy and poorly located sidepanels are top of the list. The lack of primary kickstarting is also a major flaw on a machine that must stop and start as often as an enduro bike. And when you stack these points against the Kawasaki's good all-around finish, the KDX does seem to shine more brightly.

But little details are not going to decide the winner of this shootout. The KDX could have all the enduro features possible and Husky followers would still think it was closer to a DT-1 Yamaha than a *real* enduro bike. They'd be wrong, though. Kawasaki approached the enduro business from another side than the Husky camp, but the KDX250 is still a very competitive bike. One that we think is better overall, especially considering its $600 price advantage, than the Husky.

If you think the Husky is better for you, go right ahead and buy one. The 250WR is still a remarkable machine, by anyone's measure. But one of these days a Japanese enduro bike is going to pass it in the woods—and chances are, the winner of *that* deep woods comparison, like this one, will be the KDX250. •

Ride Review

• No enduro bike feels so capable beneath you as the Husky 250WR. It's so well balanced that it practically rolls down the trail by itself. When this bike moves, it does so in a single fluid motion. Control is its watchword. If I had to choose a motorcycle to ride a tightrope strung across the Grand Canyon, the Husky 250WR would be it.

In comparison, the Kawasaki bulls through the woods like a hook-and-ladder. You hunch over the narrow handlebar, controlling the front wheel more precisely and with less effort than the Husky, but the rear end of the bike swings back and forth on its poor tire, like part of a separate motorcycle. The KDX is a model of stability at speed, but it can't finesse obstacles like the Husky.

But when it comes to deciding the winner here, none of this makes much difference. The Kawasaki blows the odometer off of the WR. While the Husky bucks on the whoops and gasps for air on any long hillclimb, the KDX levitates over the rough stuff and calls for upshifting on the hills. Traction and control might be the Husky's strong suit, but the implacable clock at the end of any enduro will judge the speedy KDX the winner in this comparison. My instincts might fight it, but there's just no arguing with the clock.

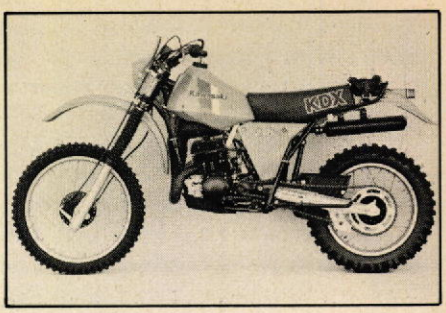
—Michael Jordan

• I find it hard to believe that Husqvarna's 250WR takes my runner-up position in this enduro shootout. After all, Husky has been building world-championship enduro mounts for the past eight years—not Kawasaki.

That's not to say that the KDX250 is a perfect enduro bike right out of the crate. It isn't. Its motocrosser's engine response and poor tire traction make riding the Kawasaki an unsettling experience on any terrain that offers less than ideal grip. I found myself entering turns by flattracking to the outside, hoping for the slightest bit of a berm to change my direction.

Too little traction was the least of the Husky's problems, though. The underpowered WR engine falls short when speed is needed in a hurry for exiting slow turns or topping the monster hill that just appeared out of nowhere. And how can any real enduro bike come equipped without primary kickstarting?

For the money you save buying the KDX instead of the WR, you could turn the Kawasaki into a fine enduro bike with good traction and the right powerband for any kind of enduro riding. Obviously, all the time that Husky was out collecting enduro championships, Kawasaki was out taking notes. *—Mark Diotte*



Kawasaki KDX250

IMPORTER: Kawasaki Motors Corporation
2009 East Edinger Avenue
Santa Ana, California 92711

CATEGORY: enduro

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $1899

ENGINE

Type	two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four transfers, one booster transfer, one exhaust
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 64.9mm
Displacement	249.8cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	7.3:1
Carburetion	one 34mm Mikuni slide/needle
Air filter	washable oiled foam element
Lubrication	pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system	primary kick
Ignition	flywheel-magneto CDI
Charging system	none; direct AC lighting

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive	straight-cut gears; 2.500:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Final drive	#520 chain (⅝-in. pitch, ¼-in. width); 3.846:1 (50/13) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.583	24.840	3.1
II	1.800	17.308	4.5
III	1.350	12.981	6.0
IV	1.100	10.577	7.3
V	0.909	8.741	8.9
VI	0.778	7.479	10.4

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front	air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter/9.9 in. (251 mm)
Rear	15mm preload adjustment, 4-way adjustable rebound damping/11.0 in. (279 mm)

BRAKES

Front	drum, single-leading shoe
Rear	drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front	3.00x21 Dunlop Sports K390
Rear	5.10x18 Dunlop Sports K390

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

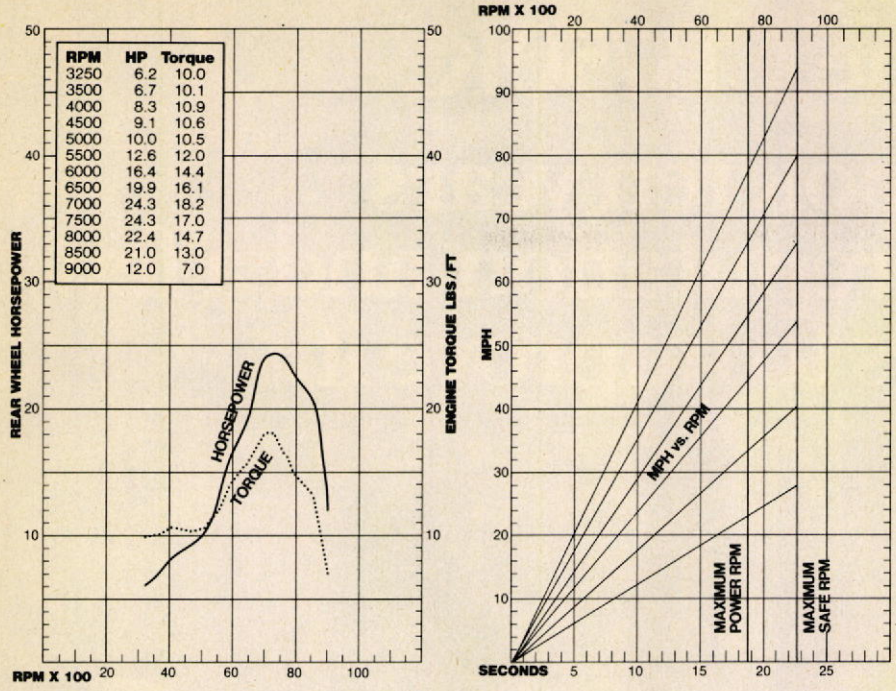
Weight	248 lbs. (112kg)
Weight distribution	46.4% front, 53.6% rear
Wheelbase	59.0 to 60.0 in. (1499 to 1524mm)
Seat height	37.0 in. (940mm)
Handlebar width	32.5 in. (826mm)
Footpeg height	15.5 in. (394mm)
Ground clearance	12.0 in. (305mm), at skidplate
Steering head angle	28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.7 in. (120mm)
Frame	tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank	plastic, 2.9 gal. (11.0/), no reserve
Instrumentation	odometer, tripmeter resettable in tenths

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (calculated)	94 mph (150 kph)

WARRANTY: 90 days

AVAILABLE COLORS: green only

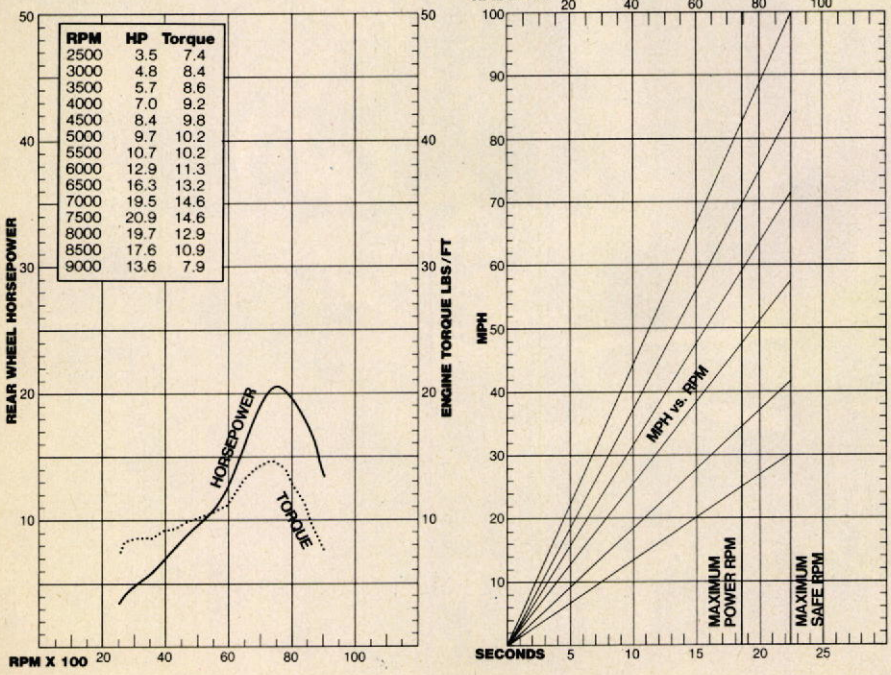


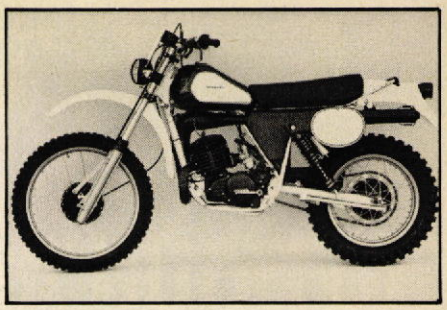
KAWASAKI KDX250

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make & Model	Horsepower	Wheel Travel Front/Rear, in.	Weight (fuel tank empty), lb.	Weight bias Front/Rear percent	Transmission, number of speeds
Kawasaki KDX250	24.3	9.9/11.0	248	46.4/53.6	6
Husqvarna 250WR	20.9	9.5/10.3	248	45.6/54.4	6
Husqvarna 250WR-79	21.9	9.5/9.5	238	44.1/55.9	5
Kawasaki KLX250	15.2	9.9/10.5	239	46.1/53.9	5
Yamaha IT250G	27.7	9.8/9.8	244	43.4/56.6	6
Yamaha TT250G	17.7	8.8/7.5	242	44.0/56.0	5

HUSQVARNA 250WR





Husqvarna 250WR

IMPORTER: Husqvarna Motorcycle Company, Inc.
4925 Mercury Street
San Diego, California 92111

CATEGORY: enduro

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $2515

ENGINE

Type ..... two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement ..... one reed-valve-controlled intake, four transfers, two booster transfers, one exhaust
Bore and stroke ..... 69.5mm x 64.5mm
Displacement 244.7cc
Compression ratio (uncorrected) 12.3:1
Carburetion ..... one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Air filter ..... washable oiled foam element
Lubrication ..... pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system ..... kick, in neutral
Ignition ..... flywheel-magneto CDI
Charging system ..... none; direct AC lighting

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 2.267:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #520 chain (⅝-in. pitch, ¼-in. width); 4.077:1 (13/53) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.366	21.867	3.5
II	1.714	15.841	4.8
III	1.303	12.043	6.4
IV	1.042	9.631	8.0
V	0.882	8.152	9.4
VI	0.741	6.849	11.2

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 35 mm stanchion tube diameter/9.5 in. (241mm)
Rear ..... 5-way adjustable spring preload/10.3 in. (287mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... drum, single-leading shoe
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front ..... 3.00x21 Barum Motocross Special S27A
Rear ..... 140/90-17 Barum Cross Special C9

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight ..... 248 lbs. (112kg)
Weight distribution ..... 45.6% front, 54.4% rear
Wheelbase ..... 56.5 to 57.5 in. (1435 to 1460mm)
Seat height ..... 36.2 in. (919mm)
Handlebar width ..... 33.8 in. (859mm)
Footpeg height ..... 15.0 in. (381mm)
Ground clearance ..... 10.0 in. (254mm), at frame rails
Steering head angle ..... 29.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 6.0 in. (152mm)
Frame ..... tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank ..... aluminum, 2.1 gal. (8.0l), no reserve
Instrumentation ..speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable in tenths

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (calculated) ..... 100 mph (161 kph)

WARRANTY: 30 days on frame and engine only

AVAILABLE COLORS: blue only

The CB750K.

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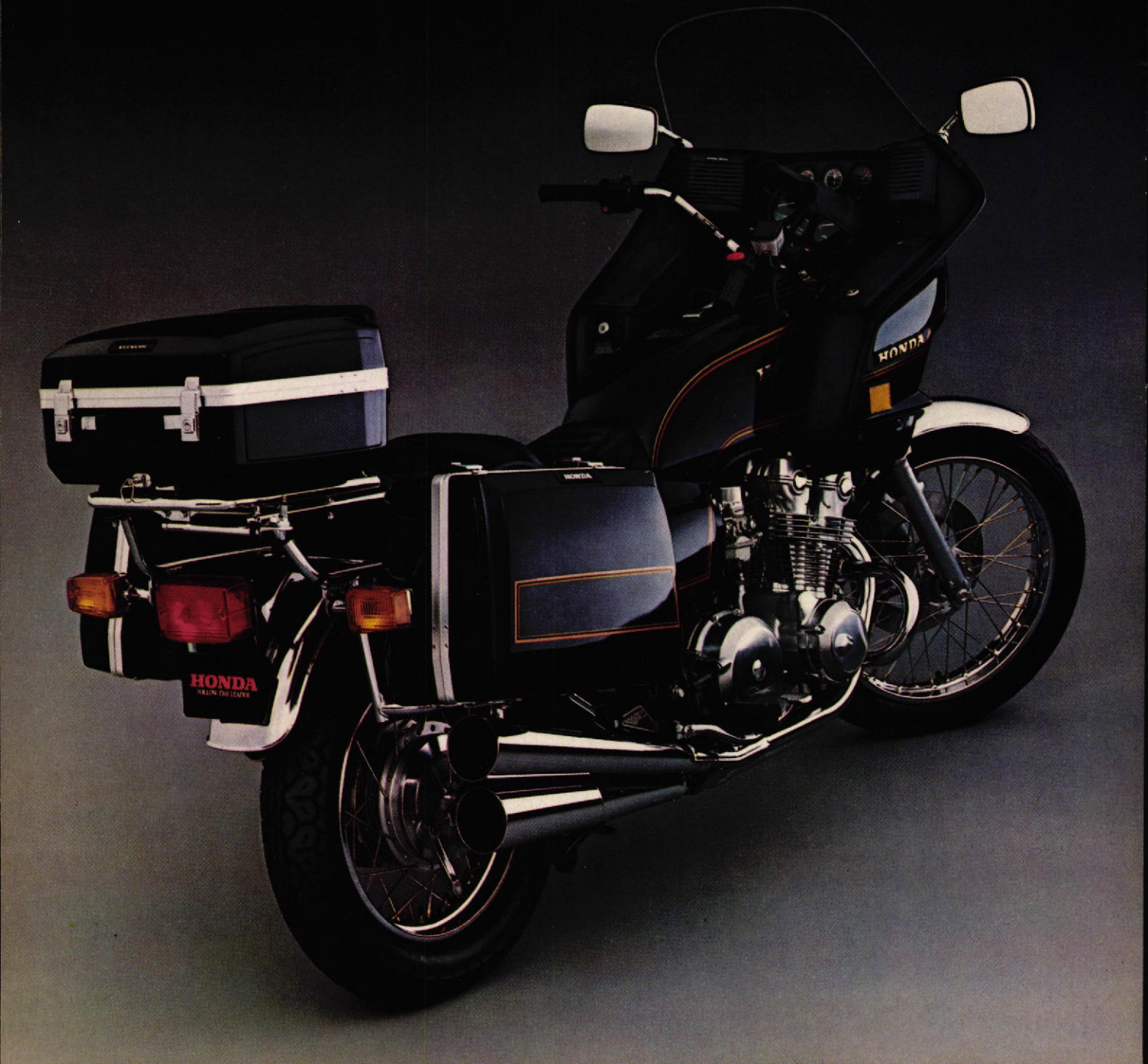

Since 1969, the Honda CB750 has done more than simply make a reputation.

It's made history.

For the nearly half million riders who have owned it and the millions more who have read about it, studied it and simply envied it, this motorcycle has become the standard by which all 750s are judged. The standard for power, for handling, for smoothness, for reliability.

Now, at the beginning of its second decade, Honda raises this standard even higher.

By introducing options.

Be an exterior decorator.

This year, you can dress your CB750K for anything from cross-town commuting to cross-country exploration.

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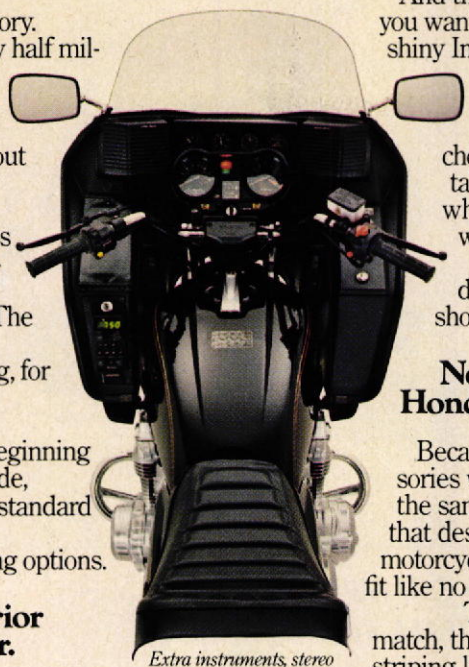

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But the way they fit isn't just cosmetics, it's also the way they work. The fairing, for instance, is molded from ABS plastic instead of fiberglass. Because ABS plastic is stronger and stays handsome longer.

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Outside, you'll discover a level of hardware and craftsmanship destined for a long life in the fast lane.

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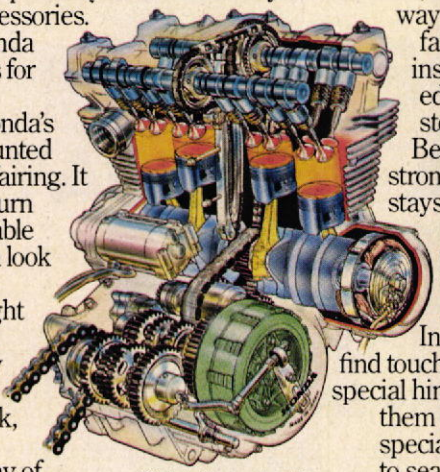
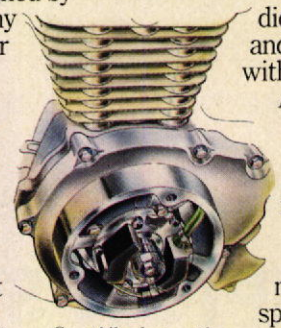


This is the standard for performance and reliability in the 750 class.



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It also applies to everything you put on them.

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But don't let what goes on the CB750K make you forget how it goes.

This motorcycle is a direct descendant of Honda's first four-cylinder superbikes. And in every year since its introduction, it's been reworked, rethought and lovingly refined.

Along the way, 16 intake and exhaust valves replaced the original 8. For better engine breathing.

Likewise, it received Honda's exclusive Pentroof™ heads. For higher combustion efficiency.

Transistorized ignition did away with points and the maintenance that goes with them.

Air-adjustable forks and Variable Hydraulic Damping™ shocks made its ride more comfortable.

And constant velocity carburetors made its response more responsive.

If all this seems like a lot of changes for what everyone thought was a great motorcycle, don't worry. That's how a great motorcycle stays that way.

Practice makes perfect applies to price tags, too.

While the engineering of the CB750K has been keeping ahead of the times, its price tag hasn't.

In fact, it's been falling behind.

If you compare the 1981 CB750K with other motorcycles in its class, you'll discover that it's possible to pay less for a motorcycle and actually get more.

Which not only makes the attractive CB750K even more attractive, it gives you a built in bonus.

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EDITED BY JEFF BURTT

Hannah vs. Howerton

MXing it up, down and dirty at the Nationals.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 PATRICK BEHAR

• Kent Howerton was hurting. Here it was, the first week in May, the eight-month national motocross season not halfway over and the usually-in-shape Howerton was really hurting. It concerned him, too, because as defending champion of the 250cc Nationals—historically the first title chase concluded each year—Howerton was facing five straight weeks of outdoor agony in his bid to keep the crown he won so convincingly in 1980. The 250 Nats, an eight-race series, would wind up with a mid-June event in Colorado, but in early May, after three races, Howerton had only built a slim 14-point lead over his nemesis, the former champ Bob Hannah who was returning with a vengeance to the AMA professional MX circuit that a broken leg had forced him to prematurely retire from for all of the '80 season.

"From the beginning of the year I haven't really been strong," said Howerton. "It started in January in Japan when I was testing the new bikes. I caught a flu bug over there and wasn't able to shake it. When the season started I really wasn't able to breathe right, to aerate. I got tired early. Finally, after the Houston Supercross in mid-March I went to a chest specialist and he told me I had an asthma-like infection, maybe caused by that Japanese bug, maybe allergies. He gave me some deep-breathing pills and they helped, I started to feel good again. Then came the Saddleback thing with Bob," he said. The complications from that are what's bothering me now."

That Saddleback "thing" with Hannah was considered at the time a mildly controversial bump-and-shove match at the second outdoor National of the year. Hannah, who was unavailable for comment despite repeated attempts to contact him before presstime, has long been known as an aggressive competitor in a tough physical sport who occasionally bulls through riders, rather than around them. When he goes down, a not-uncommon occurrence, his ability to keep his machine running and the quickness of his remount are matters rapidly approaching

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Howerton soars even when sore

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legendary proportions.

What happened in the first moto at Saddleback is disputed by both riders. What trackside observers saw, however, were at least three instances of severe handlebar-banging between the two as they stretched out a lead over the rest of the pack. "The first time, I had a wheel on Bob," said Howerton, "and I was turning into a berm and accelerating out. He went high, over the berm and up by the fence, and just dropped straight down into me. He hit me first," Howerton attested. "He's been racing that way for a while now, but I'm not going to back off. I was *ready* to quit, but he kept it up."

For his part, Hannah was quoted later as saying "the first time he passed me he rammed me, so I got a little mad and passed him back. The second and third times he rammed me, too. So the fourth time *he* got rammed. I rammed him on purpose." He was reported as saying further that if Howerton "wants to ride dirty, I'll ride dirty. That's not the way I want to ride, but that's the way it goes sometimes."

Their fourth get-together occurred just past the midpoint of the moto, and was to have serious consequences for Howerton; consequences that would bother him for at least a month and that might just mitigate against his recapturing the 250cc championship. Howerton was leading, and had just landed from a double jump and was slowing, setting up for a slippery turn. Hannah came off the double jump wide open and hit Howerton in the middle of the turn, knocking Howerton's Suzuki down. He remounted and managed to re-pass Hannah for the moto win—and engaged in another spirited second moto dice before giving way to the Yamaha rider—but Howerton had sustained an injury to his left arm that was to prove troublesome.

Four days after Saddleback, at his home in San Antonio, Texas, Howerton's arm began to swell. "I felt like I had a bad cold," he said, "because my armpit was swollen, too, and all my joints hurt." His doctor gave him antibiotics but by that night his temperature was elevated and the pain was worse. Howerton's wife, Jill, drove him to the hospital where he spent the night receiving intravenous antibi-

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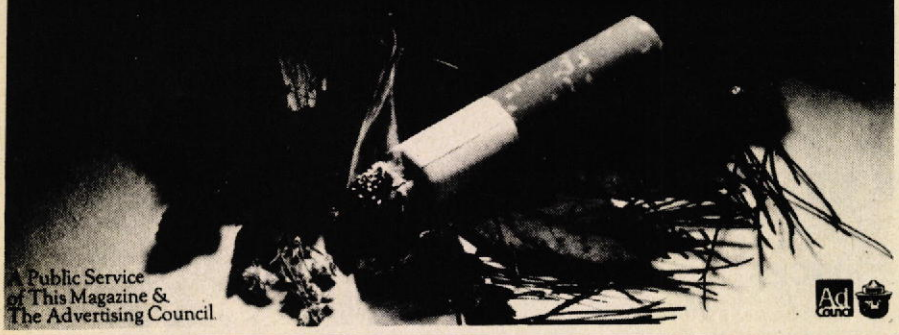

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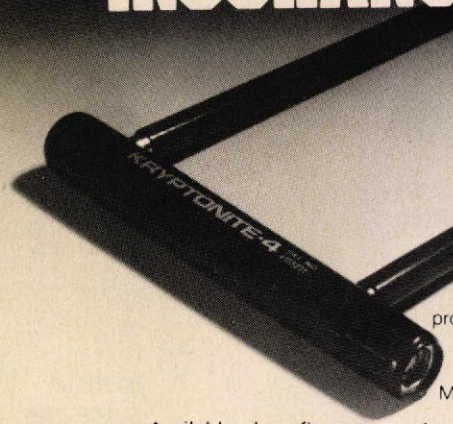

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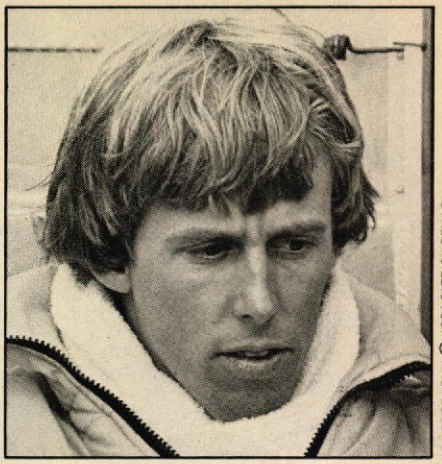


PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 PATRICK BEHAR

Hannah's back and the crowd loves it

But berm-busting puts most riders down.

otics to quell what had become a serious infection. And following the next outdoor round at Lake Whitney, Texas—where Howerton edged Hannah for the overall in an incident-free event—Howerton became hyperthermic and had to be ice-toweled down afterwards. In his weakened condition, he again contracted a flu, the effects of which he carried into the month of May. His only hope was to regain his strength for the tough five-week push ahead.

"The thing is," he said, cutting to the heart of the issue, "that AMA professionals should have enough control to not get into these situations." Howerton acknowledges that motocross is physical and that injury is a part of the game, but he knows, too, that unnecessary risk-taking and deliberate contact are anathema to success in the sport. "He (Hannah) came off the double jump wide open at Saddleback," said Howerton, "what did he expect would happen?

"I didn't think Bob was going to try something that stupid," he continued. "It was calculated. If I had known he was going to do that I would've stopped and kicked his ass. The thing is, Hannah had won for so long he expected people to back off for him. But since he was out all last year, and the rest of us got better, most of the riders—even Novices, sometimes—are now giving him trouble. And so he starts losing his cool.

"I don't care," concludes Howerton, seemingly souring on the subject, "I just want to bear down on the rest of the Nationals and keep my strength up. I consider myself an intelligent person, and an intelligent racer. What Hannah does is his business—it's nice to be a winner, but you can't be one all the time. I can handle him outdoors."

Brave words, with 10 motos in five weeks facing him. By mid-June Howerton's and Hannah's season will, in effect, be over; the results in, the decision rendered, the champion crowned. But one has to think that the legacy of this confrontation will be scars that might cloud their future meetings, and that the air will not be clear for some time.

—Jeff Burtt

Continued

Winners & Losers

Retirement

It's a part of racing, but it doesn't come easy.

• Retirement might as well be a four-letter word for racers. Any racer worth the name on his leathers competes for one reason only: winning. And retirement is the antithesis of winning. It's an admission to old age, a way of saying "I can't do it any more." And racers—winning racers—never admit failure.

To be sure, racers never include retirement in pit-talk. They race, literally, as if there were no tomorrow. Few racers have retirement funds. Their money is spent on pistons and tires, not annuity programs. Retirement is for the old guys in the Turn Four bleachers to ponder.

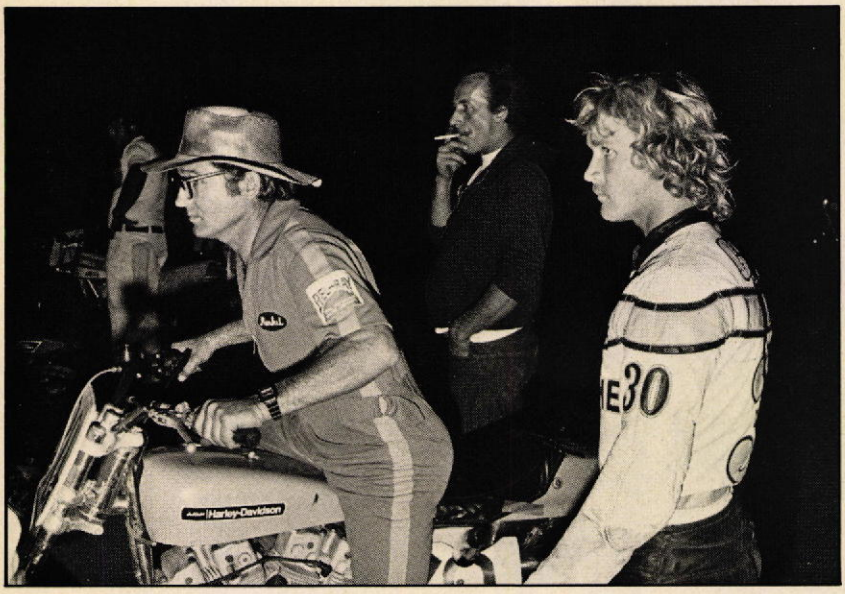
But it comes. And when it hits a racer, it's worse than the middle-age crisis facing stock brokers and school teachers, because a racer thrives off his ego—and when he can't win any longer, his ego is deflated. He has to say to himself—*and the other racers*—that it's all over for him. He's a winner one day, a has-been the next. He's not listed in the program, nor is his name mentioned on the PA, except for the customary VIP welcome in between heats.

One man who's heard plenty of those obligatory VIP announcements is Harley-Davidson team boss Dick O'Brien. Having seen champions come and go, O'Brien can recognize when a racer is washed up: "You can tell when a guy's over the top. Some guys blame equipment. They don't want to blame themselves, which means they have to give it up. It's a tough decision. It's like giving up cigarette smoking overnight," he says.

OB recalls when factory rider and 1955 AMA champ Brad Andres retired: "Brad quit cold turkey—at a time when he was one of the best roadracers in the country. It wasn't a case of being over the hill, I think he just plain had enough. He could have still won roadraces. In fact, after he won his last Daytona in 1960, he told me he didn't think he'd race there any more. As it turned out, he was right."

The three-time Daytona 200 winner Andres was an exception. As cleanly as Andres left the Harley camp, three-time AMA champ Bart Markel never seemed capable of mothballing his leathers in the attic. Recalls O'Brien, "At one point in time Bart was having a hard time—falling off and not doing too well. I talked to him about quitting, as did some of his friends. I didn't want to see him get hurt, or something like that. The next year he came back and won six Nationals. Proved we all were dumb."

Markel wasn't always so confident. He reflects on a period he was "burnt-out on racing," and told O'Brien he was returning the bikes and equipment at season's end. But this time OB told him to think about it over the winter. Black Bart came back again—winning, of course. He says



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Bart Markel tuning for Randy Goss, circa '77

You just can't keep Black Bart off a bike.

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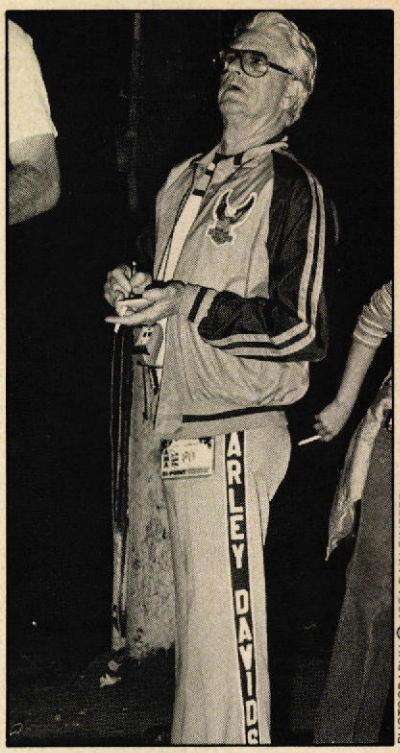

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DAIN GINGERELLI

Harley czar Dick O'Brien on pit wall

Watching champs come and go.

now, "I guess every racer goes through those periods, but when you start to get away from racing, you realize you miss it."

Markel continued racing after that, and accumulated 28 Grand National wins—a record that stood until Kenny Roberts broke it at Houston last year. Finally, when Markel hit the big Four-Oh, he noticed that parts of his body didn't react the same as they had 20 years earlier: "Then I determined I couldn't win any more. I'd lost something—my eyesight wasn't quite as good as it used to be, my coordination wasn't quite as good as it used to be. Hell, I guess nothing's quite as good as it used to be. It goes slowly, and it's hard to understand or even realize when it's happening. That's the hard part about retiring."

While Markel could see his empire crumble around him, others such as Mert Lawwill and Mark Brelsford weren't so fortunate. Both were Grand National champs; both rode for Harley-Davidson; both were fine racers. And both were forced into retirement by illness and injury, respectively. And as any racer will attest, illness and injury are the two DNS (Did Not Start) demons feared most.

Lawwill's retirement was slow in coming. While working in his shop between races one day, he suddenly got dizzy and violently sick. He spent the next week in bed. "I called a doctor, and he said it was laybrinthesis, an illness where fluids build up in the inner ear, tossing your balance off kilter." As motorcycle racers know,

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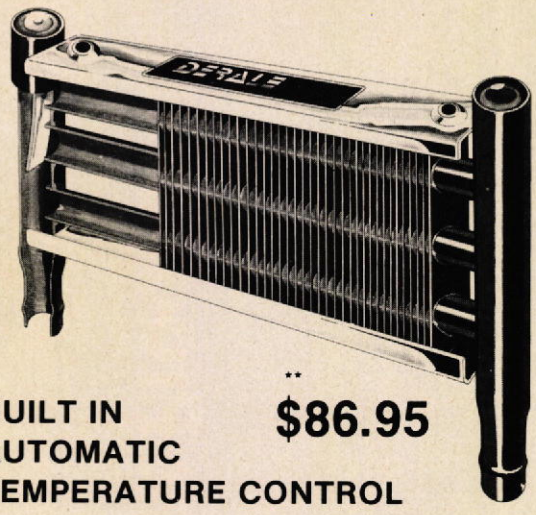

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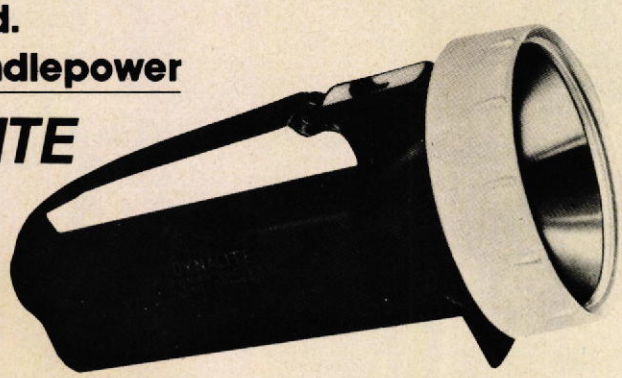

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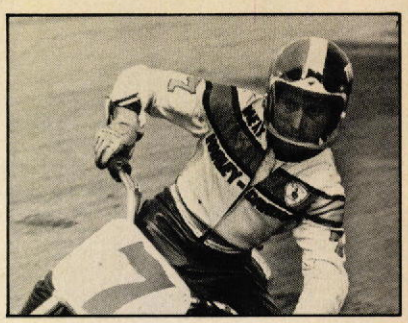
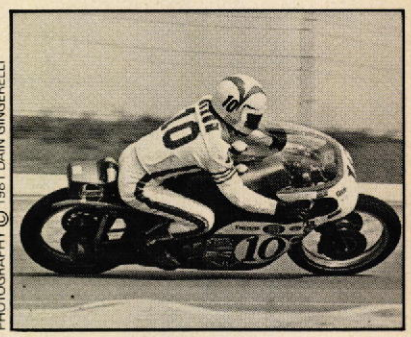


Mert Lawwill balancing on the edge

Shutting off is a matter of experience.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DAIN GINGERELLI

Gary Nixon at Ontario, 1971

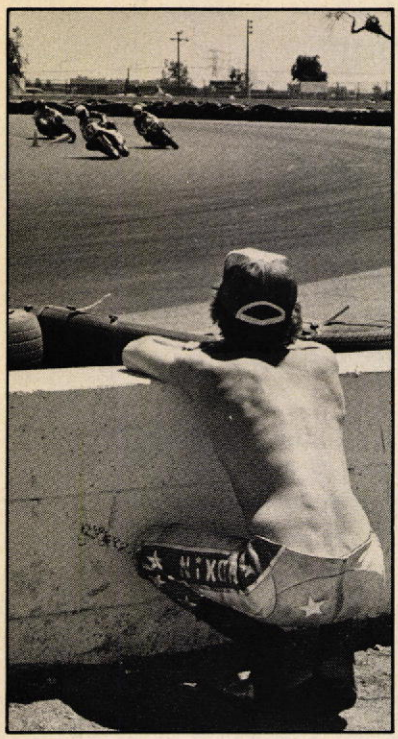
Aggression in the Seventies—perfect 10.

balance is a prime ingredient to winning. "I wasn't satisfied and went to another doctor. He said the same thing, so I went to a specialist. When *he* said the same thing, I was convinced."

Lawwill went on a low-sodium diet to cure the illness, but in the meantime, continued to race. "I felt I had raced so many years that I could compensate through experience—you know, shutting off for certain turns and stuff. That didn't work. I finally had to quit when I couldn't rely on myself from Sunday to Sunday. I was totally in the blues after that. I felt cheated. I wasn't through yet, and I was forced out because of illness."

Brelsford ended the 1972 season—and his career—with the Number One plate attached to his hospital bed. After a fiery crash at Daytona which smashed his hand, he spent the next few weeks healing and was patched up in time for the grueling summer schedule of miles and half-miles. There he met Mr. Retirement's call-man: A multi-bike pile-up at the Columbus half-mile beat Brelsford's leg to a pulp, and he almost died twice in the hospital from the subsequent infection. Says O'Brien, "I think he figured he'd gambled enough after that."

Brelsford quit while still one of the top riders in the country. He still frequents some races, and one year, before the San Jose Mile, O'Brien let him joyride one of the H-D team bikes around for a couple of laps. In OB's words, "He looked just like the old Mark Brelsford." The softness in



Gary Nixon on the safe side of the track

"It beats watching nothing."

O'Brien's voice said it all—he missed Mark's racing as much as the former champ did, too.

Some guys, though, just can't let go. Bart Markel is one. He spends his Michigan winters on the indoor ice tracks: "I still race, but for fun. I tell the kids, 'if you can catch me, you can run over me—but if you do, I'm going to do the same to you at the next corner'." And even at 46 years of age, don't think Black Bart Markel has lost any of his racing savvy. "I'd still be out racing half-miles if I didn't have a wife and kids. I enjoy the sport, and the people in it," he says.

Gary Nixon's sentiments aren't as warm. Possibly the toughest and most aggressive roadracer of the Seventies, Nixon's wallet forced him to the sidelines: "I retired because there wasn't enough money to pay the bills. Erv Kanemoto (tuner and owner of Nixon's last ride in 1978) lost $17,000 our last year, and I didn't want to put my own money into it. So I just quit." And for a guy who would race until he couldn't walk any more, it was a tough thing to do. Money, more than old age, forced Nixon to tell the other racers, "Hey, I can't do it any more, guys."

Lawwill sums up retiring best: "When a racer's 80 years old, he still thinks he can do it." But nobody sponsors an 80-year-old racer. So they watch from the pit wall, and listen to the customary VIP welcome over the PA. As Nixon coldly put it, "Yeah, I guess I like watching races—it's better than watching nothing." —*Dain Gingerelli*

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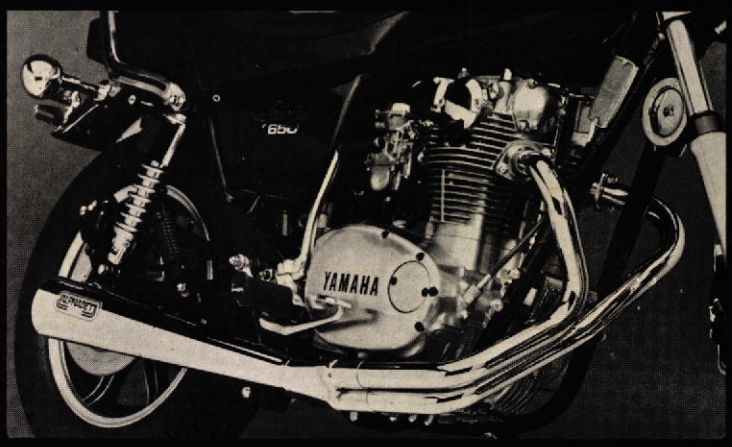

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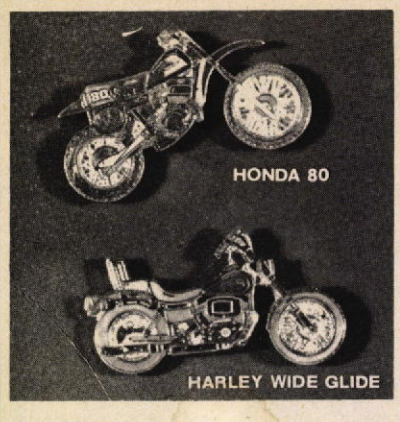

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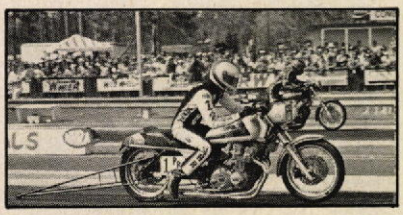
Pit Bits

• As a result of the **controversy** surrounding the selection of the British team for the Trans-Atlantic **Trophy Series,** serious thought is being given to expanding the two-team format to include a **third** set of riders from Australia and New Zealand. This year's Easter Match Races were won by the Brits—with 466 points to the U.S.A.'s 345—but the 150,000-plus spectators were **deprived** of seeing roadrace superstars like Gregg Hansford and Graeme Crosby compete, due to their being passed over for lesser-known English riders by the British selection committee. A **hue and cry** arises every year in the U.K. over the selection procedure, with some fans championing their homegrown product and some claiming that the entire Kingdom should be scoured for the best talent. It is hoped that the addition of an **Aussie/Kiwi** team will mollify the critics.

• Terry **Vance,** the 27-year-old go-fast quarter-miler of Vance/Hines racing, **shattered** both ends of the NHRA Pro Stock dragrace record at the 12th annual NHRA Gatornationals. Vance launched



The Vance/Hines Racing cakewalk

A shattering stripper.

his Suzuki GS1100 to an 8.62-second, 153.32 mph run, lowering the old ET mark by 0.15 seconds and raising the old top speed standard by 2.06 mph. Both former **records** were his, too.

• **Aspencade,** the touring rally held in late September in Ruidoso, New Mexico will host a **special** Superbike Grand Prix roadrace this year. Details of the event—from the size of the bikes to the winner's payoff—are sketchy, but promoter Til Thompson swears it will be the "First- and probably last-annual roadrace we'll run." Entrants must be registered **delegates** of Aspencade, and the $5 entry fee will be donated to Harley-Davidson's MD charity fund. A special tour pin will be awarded every participant. Rumors that an Omega **sundial** will be used to record lap times of the Tour Glides could not be confirmed at presstime.

• The Rider's World Series, an alternative to and direct **competitor** with the FIM World Roadrace Championships **proposed** two years ago by Kenny Roberts and others, has reared its head again. This

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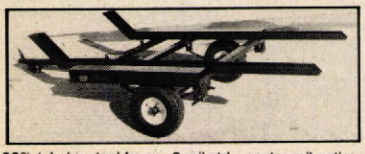
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time out, the **mastermind** is Formula One car racer Jody Schecter, with assistance from a mysterious Englishman who wishes to remain **anonymous.** The six-round series is planned to debut at Britain's Donington Park on the weekend of August 29–30 and **worldwide** television coverage is currently being negotiated. Sponsorship and top-name rider entries are said to be already inked, but no confirmation was forwarded by our European **deep throat.**

• Another FIM **ruling** will affect the 24-hour Bol d'Or, tentatively scheduled for September 26–27 at the Paul Ricard circuit in France. This year, the FIM has authorized the use of **turbochargers** for the famed endurance roadracing event and will gauge their success with an eye toward sanctioning turbos for the entire World Championship series in 1982. Teams from Honda and Yamaha are reportedly already **entered**—which seems likely, since an '81 Bol d'Or turbo win could be used by either manufacturer in an advertising **blitz** to introduce their heavily-rumored production turbo street bikes.

• Team Suzuki reports that **"Rocket"** Rex Staten, whose career has gone almost as low-budget as NASA's, has been **contracted** to ride the 500cc MX Nationals this summer. Staten will be production RM-mounted, and could also ride a stock RM250 at the two remaining Supercross rounds.

• Mark **Barnett,** a genuine Suzuki star, has virtually wrapped up the Supercross championship, much to the despair of the Superbowl of Motocross promoters. The July 11 **berm-o-rama** should, however, be its usual spectacular self even if the **coronation** of Barnett is a foregone conclusion.

• Despite **indifferent** results so far, Barry Sheene is receiving top-of-the-line tuning help on the FIM roadrace circuit. Erv **Kanemoto,** whose last two riders were Freddie Spencer and Gary Nixon, and ace Kiwi mechanic Ken **Fletcher** are turning the wrenches on Sheene's Yamaha square-four. And rumors of a personality **rift** between Sheene and his **teammate** Kenny Roberts are premature. When Sheene starts beating—or even pressing—Roberts, *then* sparks might fly. •

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Sheene, Kanemoto and Fletcher

So far, a no-win combination.

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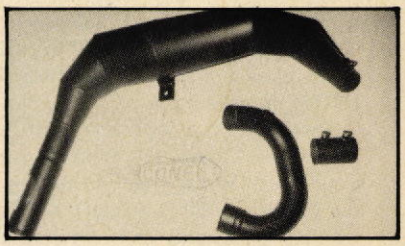
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RUMORBIKE

I have a few thousand dollars saved up and am ready to invest in a new bike. My only problem is that the one I want has yet to be produced. In fact, I have not even heard of its possible existence.

Any one of the Japanese manufacturers can produce it, and it should have the following features: belt final drive, 750–1000cc displacement, triple discs, electronic ignition, air forks, halogen headlight. It would also be nice if it were light for its class and could stop in less than 130 feet from 60 mph.

Maybe CYCLE GUIDE could start rumors and then the manufacturers would feel like they had to catch up. In the meantime, I'll just continue to play with my money and read your magazine.

George Dhabolt
Glendale, California

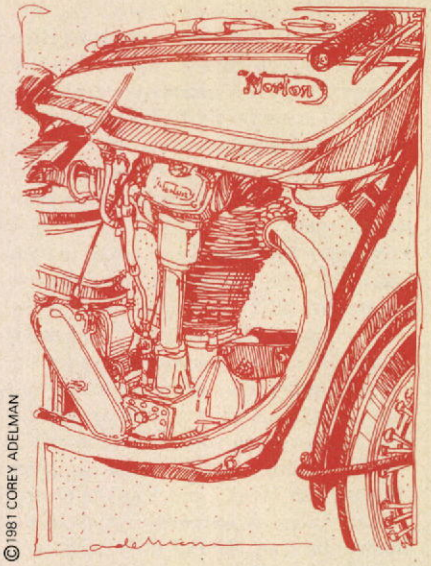
Glad it's not the other way around—ed.

HYPE THE TYPE

I have enjoyed reading CYCLE GUIDE for many years until recently. The content is just fine, but the small type has now become a problem. Do you plan a policy change on size of type in the near future?

S.M. Sanfilippo
San Jose, California

CG's typeface is now a half-point larger than before (an increase of over six percent) in response to several letters.—ed.



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IMMATERIALISM

I must take exception to the BMW vs. CBX sport-touring test in your May issue. In these days of double-digit inflation and ridiculous prices, I just can't understand how anyone can rationally justify $7500 for a motorcycle. I guess you folks must all make $50,000-plus as writers, drive 450 SELs and buy your spark plugs at Gucci's. Come on now, guys, how can $7500 for a bike be "immaterial?" It's statements like that that make me believe our media has its head in the clouds. But I guess I should realize that if I don't drive a Mercedes or summer in Palm Springs or own a $300,000 home or think it's immaterial to plunk down $7500 for a motorcycle, then I shouldn't be reading your magazine anyhow.

Do me a favor. Whenever Honda comes out with a $7500 sport-tourer, match that Honda against your "price is immaterial" BMW.

Gene Sederholm
Long Beach, California

Someone once said that the difference between a predetermined conclusion and

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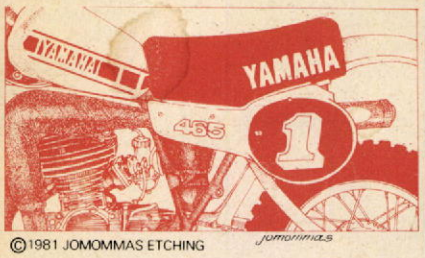
LETTERS *Continued*

an identical final result is that you wasted your time arriving at your decision. The problem with *this* one-liner is simple: It supposes that all investigation and testing is pointless. This, of course, is rarely true—excepting the case of Steve Thompson and his red dinosaur (*CG*, May '81).

Speed *is* the difference in getting between point A and B. Sport-touring, with the emphasis on "sport", is defined as speed, quickness and power. If it is indeed effortless to ride a BMW R100RS through a series of curves then what have you accomplished? Without the expenditure of effort it is difficult to reap any rewards.



©1981 JOMOMMAS ETCHING

Steve Thompson seems to be more adept at operating the smaller, easier to handle half-liter road bikes. If he can't cut the big bikes, perhaps he should stay with the lightweights. The BMW—with its one-third of an engine and one-half hp—seems to be more his style. Stay on your velvet cushion, fella, if you can't keep up with the best, the CBX.

All interested CBX owners are welcome to join our international CBX owner's association.

Daniel Phelps
Oak Park, Michigan

Thought there was a point in there somewhere—ed.

EXPLETIVE BERATED

Paul Dean's scatalogical reference to the weather seemed quite out of place in the text of your BMW R100RS vs. Honda CBX sport-touring comparison. A number of other words would have fit much better. Despite the fact that I have not ridden the new CBX, I applaud your conclusion. The BMW may be old fashioned in many ways, but it is probably the most polished machine on the market.

Richard Manley
Laguna Beach, California

IF YOU PLAY, YOU PAY

Give me a break! In the 550 Seca (*CG*, May '81) insert "Better than Stock" you talk about the KZ550 (which you and I and everybody else loved instantly) like it's the biggest slug since a Harley. Well,

Continued

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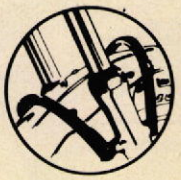

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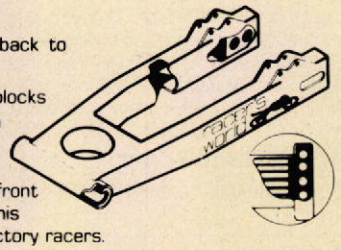

★ Constructed of two 1½" square tubes welded piggyback to greatly increase rigidity.
★ Solid aluminum adjustment blocks improve swing arm strength over standard swing arm axle mounts.
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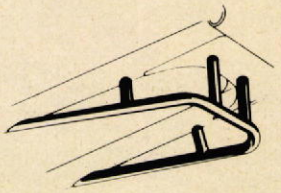

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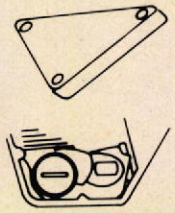

★ Designed to replace the light duty stock mounts and bolts.
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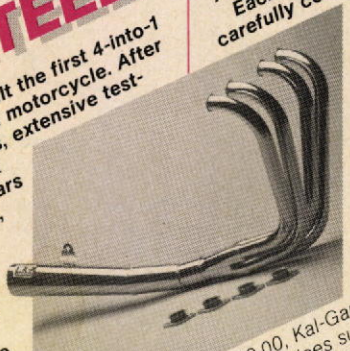

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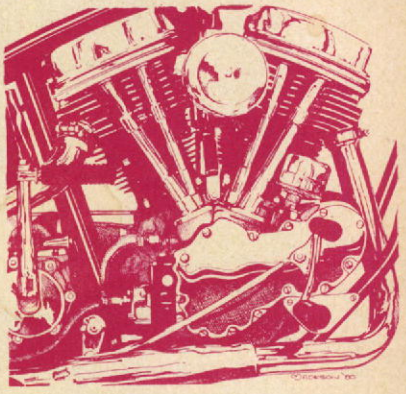
LETTERS *Continued*

for being the article's center of criticism it sure did a good job of humiliating all the other bikes in its class in Box Stock racing last year. No challenge from too many Yamahas.

So the new 550 Seca can beat last year's KZ550. Whoop-de-doo! What about this year's GPz550? Not a word was mentioned about that one. Just wait until I get my license back and me and my GPz hit the road (and the roadraces). Then we'll see who's going to rip who's throat out. But don't tell Seca owners about the GPz. If they are as ignorant as you, it will be a pleasure to watch them pull into the pits wondering what those red streaks are that keep screaming past them.

Paul Geck
Winona, Minnesota

Confine your screaming to the track and maybe you won't lose your license again—ed.



ATC OUTRAGE

I have subscribed to your magazine for two years now and have liked it, generally. Since the title of your magazine is CYCLE GUIDE, I feel that if you had the opportunity to report on Honda's number one-selling cycle of all their cycles you would do so. But as yet I haven't seen any story about the Honda ATC. I am an owner of an ATC (the "C" stands for "Cycle") and a trail rider. It seems that a lot of people are going to a lot of expense to get into three-wheeling, so why aren't you? It would also be an improvement to see more of an enduro posture in your magazine, since a lot of your readers are involved in that aspect of the sport. Lately, I have seen a lot of movement toward just street bikes and high-performance MXers. What about us more-average guys?

Bob Diercks
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Have you considered a more-average magazine? Our last ATC piece was in July '79. Our next is on page 50—ed.

Continued

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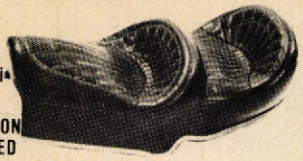

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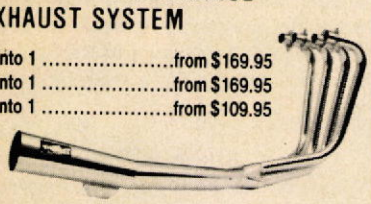

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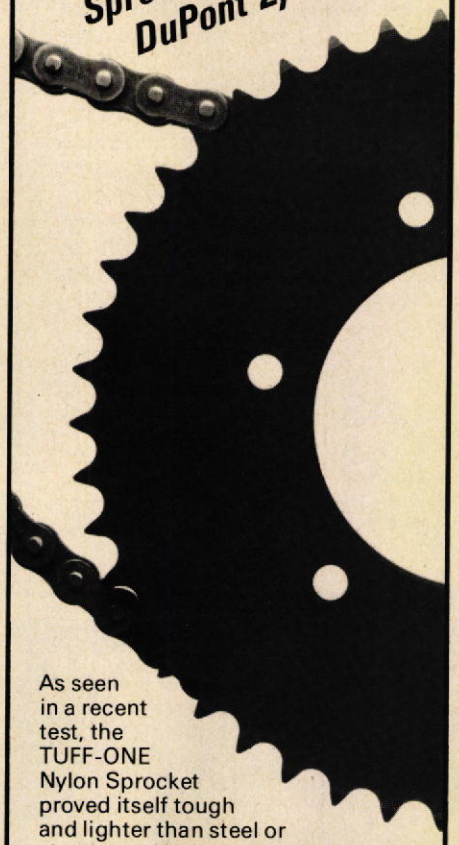

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LETTERS *Continued*

MOTO PHOTOS

I am an avid reader of your magazine and am especially interested in "Sport Lines." I greatly enjoy the terrific action photos and articles, and would like at this point to ask you a big, big favor. I was wondering if you had any extra copies of any of your action photos, especially dealing with Superbikes. I know what I am asking is almost impossible for you to give me, and I just want to let you know that you haven't lost a reader if I don't get it.

Mike Fisher
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Good, because we purchase one-time publication rights from our lenses and cannot accede to your request—ed.

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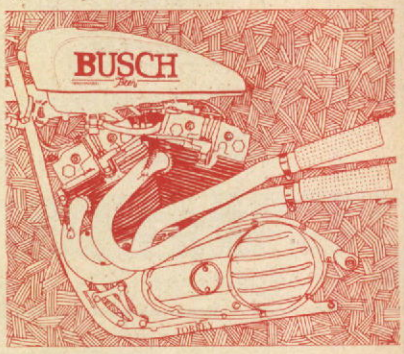

DISCO FLIP SIDE

I am writing in response to Mr. Zuckowski's letter (*CG*, April '81), and am glad to see that there are others who have a dislike for the styling exercises taking place across the water in the Far East. However, Mr. Z has missed the point entirely. Choppers are stock bikes that are custom modified by the owner to suit him. A pseudo-chopper is a bike that is assembled at the factory to resemble a chopper, but with no imagination added by the owner. If Mr. Z is such a great lover of fast, Euro-styled street bikes, why doesn't he ride the real McCoy like I do? I am the proud owner of a 1975 John Player Norton 850 Commando roadster.

As far as seeing a Rocker fall all over a dance floor, I doubt it. None of us would be caught dead on a Disco floor. Besides, who wants to dance when they could be riding? Next time *you're* out riding, Mr. Z, try humming Steppenwolf instead of the Bee Gees.

David M. Willson
Millville, New Jersey

The following is an essay in response to a letter entitled "Dance Fever" in the April issue of CYCLE GUIDE. I call it "Rock 'n Roll Roadracer."

Let me make one thing perfectly clear

Continued

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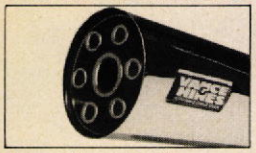

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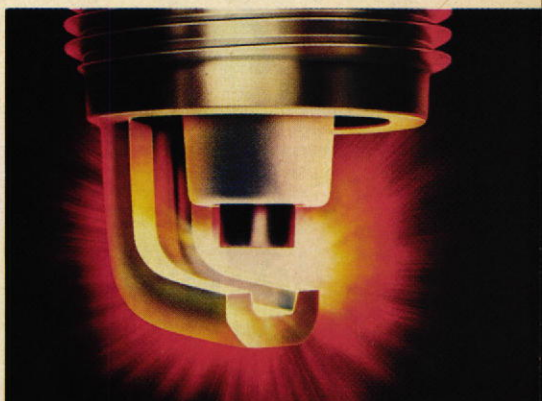

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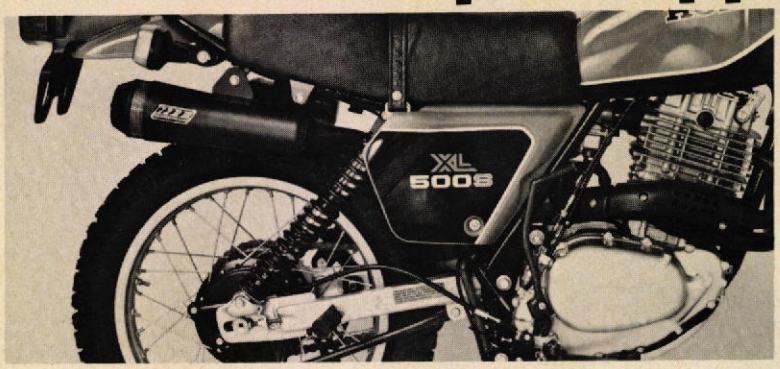

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LETTERS *Continued*

to this Zuckowski character: I love road-racing and rock music, in that order. The Led Zeppelin running through my ears, along with the rearsets and Yoshimura items on my GS1000E, should prove it. So, like all the T-shirt transfers and bumper stickers say, "Disco Sucks", and always will in my Heavy Metal, alternator cover-dragging mind. So he'd better not show his toe-tapping ass in my state.

John Engle
Vidor, Texas

We'll give you a B in sentiment, with an F in physiology—ed.

ONE IN EVERY CROWD

I would like to respond to Mr. J. Swinford's letter (*CG*, March '81), in which he praises his '78 Hawk but at the same time calls it ugly. Agreed, the '78 wasn't overly attractive, at least not the way it came stock, but its looks can be cured. First, how about putting a sissy bar/luggage rack combo on it, then crash bars, plexifairing, air horns, floorboards—maybe even a double-bucket custom seat? I guarantee that you won't even recognize that ole Hawk. My little number rides like a "Wing" and stings like an RD. Think you could convince Honda to market a Brass Wing?

J. Honden
Cleveland, Ohio

Only if they made carousels. Come on, now, are we on "Candid Camera"?—ed •

Address correspondence to LETTERS, CYCLE GUIDE *Magazine, P. O. Box 6040, Compton, California 90224. Replies are not possible except in this column. We will print as many letters and replies as space allows.*

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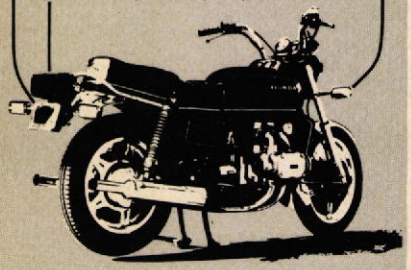

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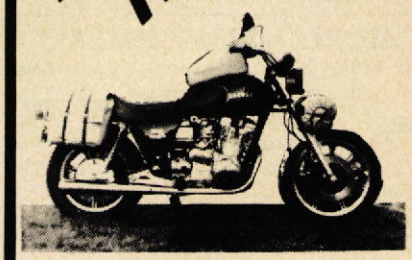

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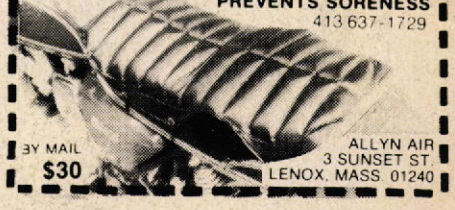
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